LONGBOW 2 • CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND • MYTH

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

WWW.CDMAG.COM NO.87 FEBRUARY 1998

DIABLO KILLER?

BALDUR'S GATE

Sets its sights on the devil

ACTION • ADVENTURE • SIMS • SPORTS • ONLINE

TANK RUSH

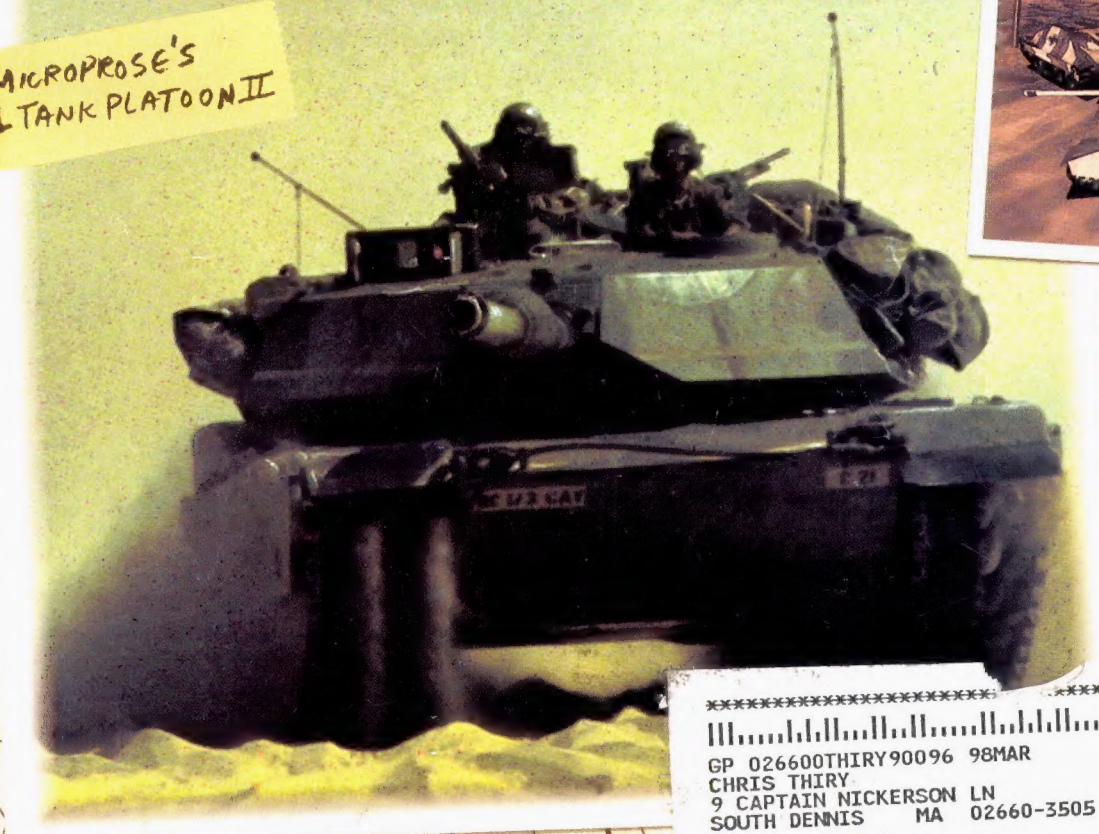
5 GAMES. 200 TONS. NO LIMITS.

MICROPROSE'S TANK PLATOON II

SSI'S PANZER COMMANDER

iPANZER '44

SPEARHEAD



3-DIGIT 026

GP 026600THIRY90096 98MAR 1 087
CHRIS THIRY
9 CAPTAIN NICKERSON LN
SOUTH DENNIS MA 02660-3505 0226

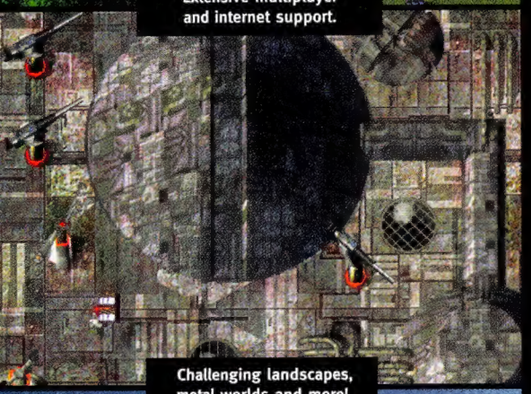
US $6.95 CAN $7.95 UK £3.95

BLADE RUNNER • TOMB RAIDER II
MADDEN 98 • NHL POWERPLAY 98
ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR • UPRISING

The word
is spreading
across
the map...

Tank battalions that respond to real 3-D terrain.
Defend your coastline from invasion.
Bombard the enemy from the safety of the sea.

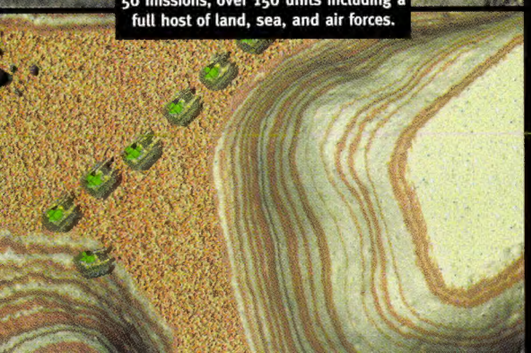
Extensive multiplayer and internet support.



Challenging landscapes, metal worlds and more!

Devastating amphibious assaults.

50 missions, over 150 units including a full host of land, sea, and air forces.



CAVEDOG ENTERTAINMENT™
PRESENTS...

TOTAL ANNIHILATION™

The New Landscape Of War

TOTAL ANNIHILATION is poised to redefine real-time strategy gaming.

"...a lock to become the new king of real-time strategy games..."
-COMPUTER GAME ENTERTAINMENT

"...the level of detail is astounding... it'll be the envy of every kid on the block..."
-PC GAMER

"...true 3D engine lifts the game into new territory..."
-COMPUTER® GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

"...TOTAL ANNIHILATION has the potential to do for real-time strategy what QUAKE did for first-person shooters ..."
-COMPUTER & NET PLAYER

AVAILABLE NOW!
Total Annihilation strategy guide from GW Press.

COMING SOON!
Total Annihilation Add-On Pack featuring all-new maps, missions, and units.

cavedog™ ENTERTAINMENT
www.cavedog.com
A GT INTERACTIVE COMPANY

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Designed for Microsoft® Windows® 95

©1997 Humongous Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Created and Published by Cavedog Entertainment, a division of Humongous Entertainment, Inc. Distributed by GT Interactive Software Corp. Cavedog Entertainment™and Total Annihilation™ are trademarks of Humongous Entertainment, Inc. GT™ is a trademark and the GT Logo® is a registered trademark of GT Interactive Software Corp. Microsoft® and Windows® are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective companies.

Download new units from www.cavedog.com
Obliterate the enemy from the high ground.
Blast opposing forces into smoking 3-D segments.
Use the 3-D terrain as cover against attack.

BOOM! NO FIGHTER.

Too bad. Didn't see it comin'.

Shrouded in secrecy, the U.S.'s JSF program delivers **the most advanced stealth technology** *ever seen in a fighter. And with a mind-numbing complement of classified weapons systems, this is one fight you won't want to miss.*

The Joint Strike Fighter is the airpower of the future.

Available in stores today.

FIRST-EVER

To feature the two prototypes for the Pentagon's new Joint Strike Fighter: Boeing's X-32 and Lockheed Martin's X-35 jet fighters.

FIRST-EVER

To feature the revolutionary ISF™ graphics that enables fluid redraws in color resolutions up to 1024x768x16 with no pixellation (and at a playable frame rate).

FIRST-EVER

To model over 10 million square miles of beautifully rendered terrain – the largest and most realistic terrain ever seen in a flight simulator.

FIRST-EVER

To reveal the future of high-tech weaponry, including the AGM-154 Joint Stand Off Weapon and the Lockheed Martin Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser.

"Killer Graphics! Joint Strike Fighter flies to the top of the 3D terrrain class"
COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

"JSF flies like a dream. The fast frame rate really gives the feeling of flying at high speeds"
ONLINE GAMING REVIEW
(COMPUTER PLAYER)

JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

THE FUTURE NOW

JSF

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

www.eidosinteractive.com

STAR
THE ONLY ALLIES
3 Unique Alien Species
Whether you command the nomadic Terrans, mysterious Protoss, or voracious Zerg, you must devise totally unique strategies to master the specialized units, abilities and technologies of each.
Intense Internet Competition
Challenge the world with FREE* access to Blizzard Battle.net.™ Up to 8 player Internet support including worldwide player rankings, tournaments and challenge ladders.
Unequaled Campaign Editor
Construct individual missions or entire campaigns with unrivaled options and ease.
BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
www.blizzard.com

STARCRAFT™

ARE ENEMIES.

REVOLUTIONARY SPECIAL EFFECTS

Real-time light sourcing, true line of sight and an advanced translucency engine combine for unparalleled visual and tactical realism.

MULTIPLE THEATERS OF BATTLE

Engage in a deadly mix of space combat, planetary assault and covert base infiltration. Command Ghost Espionage Agents, Protoss High Templars, and Zerg Defilers as you seek to conquer the galaxy.

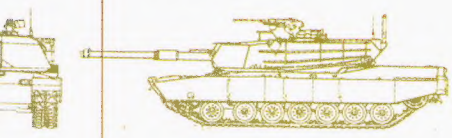
*Free access to Battle.net requires access to the Internet. Player is responsible for all applicable Internet fees.

StarCraft and Battle.net are trademarks and Blizzard is a registered trademark of Davidson & Associates, Inc.
© 1997 Blizzard Entertainment. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

ISSUE 87

FEBRUARY 1998



Cover Story

32 Five Kings Gather for Battle

Features

48 Baldur's Gate

Reviews

Online

56 Politika

Strategy

64 Myth: The Fallen Lords
68 East Front
70 Steel Panthers III
74 The Tone Rebellion

Action

80 Tomb Raider II
84 Uprising
86 Oddworld: Abe's Oddyssee
87 Nuclear Strike
88 SubCulture
89 Manx TT
91 Daytona USA Deluxe

Adventure/ Role Playing

104 The Curse of Monkey Island
108 Blade Runner
114 Zork Grand Inquisitor

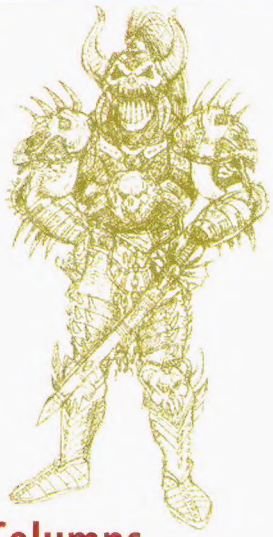
Simulations

122 Longbow 2
124 Sabre Ace

Sports

126 Madden NFL 98
129 NHL PowerPlay 98
132 SODA Off Road Racing
134 NCAA Football 98

M1 TANK PLATOON II



BALDUR'S GATE

MYTH

Columns

53 Over the Net
61 Command Post
79 Cheat Thrills
97 Road to Nowhere
100 Grue's Lair
119 The Hangar

Etc.

18 Upfront
22 News
136 Rebound

Where the hell....

NEW! Special Edition with Internet Multiplayer

...did you get those cards?

MAGIC The Gathering®

DUELS OF THE PLANESWALKERS™

THE CRITICS AGREE!

"MicroProse's game offers weeks to months of gameplay."
***Computer Gaming World*, June '97**
★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is just what the Samite Healer ordered."
***Computer Games Strategy Plus*, June '97**
★★★★

"Magic: The Gathering is a near-perfect translation of the card game."
***PC Magazine*, June '97**
★★★★

"...hard-core gamers will appreciate the flexibility offered in the computer version."
***Newsweek*, April '97**

Introducing everything you need to play *Magic*™ over the Internet.

The Original Magic...Only Better

This special edition of *Magic: The Gathering*® for the PC includes the original game, plus built-in Internet multiplayer, an enhanced interface, and cards you can't get anywhere else.

Multiplayer Over the Internet

With *ManaLink*™, *Magic's* Internet online system, wield your magic against human opponents around the world on GatheringNet at www.gathering.net.

New Cards–A Powerful Expansion!

Get over 80 new cards from Legends® and The Dark®. And, if you already own *Magic: The Gathering* for the PC, you'll get a $15 rebate. So, get what it takes to reign supreme. Because this time, it's the world you're playing with.

Available on Windows® 95. Visit your local retailer or call 1-800-695-GAME day or night (U.S. or Canada).

MICROPROSE®
www.microprose.com

MAGIC: THE GATHERING © 1997 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Illustrations by Randy Asplund-Faith, Daniel Gelon, Jeff A. Menges, Jesper Myrfors and Mark Poole. WIZARDS OF THE COAST, INC., MAGIC: THE GATHERING, LEGENDS, THE DARK, *ManaLink*, *GatheringNet*, DUELS OF THE PLANESWALKERS, the tap symbol and the mana symbols are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. MICROPROSE is a trademark of MicroProse Software, Inc. Produced under license from Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective holders.

CD CONTENTS

JEDI KNIGHT • DARK REIGN • X-MEN • TEST DRIVE 4
SCORE!
MADDEN NFL 98
NBA ACTION 98
VR BASEBALL
FIFA 98
NHL 98
DEMOS: SONIC 3D BLAST • ADDICTION PINBALL
GREAT BATTLES OF HANNIBAL • HOYLE CARDS
CART PRECISION RACING • VIRTUAL POOL 2 • DILBERT
PC CD

DEMOS

STRATEGY
Dark Reign
Seven Kingdoms
The Great Battles of Hannibal
Hoyle's Classic Card Games
Hoyle's Classic Board Games

ACTION
Jedi Knight
Test Drive 4
Addiction Pinball
X-Men: The Ravages of Apocalypse
Sonic 3D Blast
Pandemonium 2
Dink Smallwood
3D Ultra Pinball : The Lost Continent

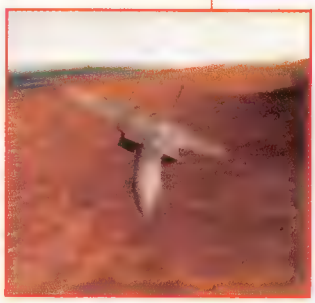
ADVENTURE
Dilbert's Desktop Games
DogDay
Winds of Zolaria

SPORTS
Madden NFL '98
NBA Action '98
VR Baseball
FIFA '98
NHL '98
CART Precision Racing
Virtual Pool 2

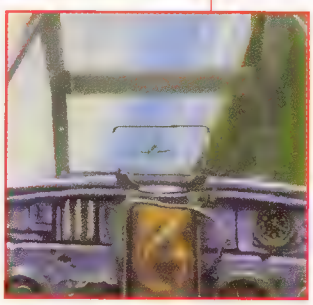
ONLINE
Terra
WebRPG
NetStorm

VIDEOS

Jane's F-15



European Air War



Grand Prix Legends
Tonic Trouble

INSTRUCTIONS

Windows 95
Place the CD disc in your CD-ROM drive. The disc will autoplay. If it fails to do so, right click on your CD-ROM icon (located in "My Computer") and select OPEN. Double-click the "Install" icon.

Windows 3.1
Place the CD in your CD-ROM drive and choose File, Run from the Program Manager. Type "D:\INSTALL," where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive, and press ENTER. Follow the instructions on screen. After installation is complete, double-click the created icon to start.

Still having problems? Send a description of the problem along with your system configuration to cgcdtech@cdmag.com, or mail a letter with the same information to the address below. If you have a defective CD-ROM, a replacement can be obtained by sending the original CD to:

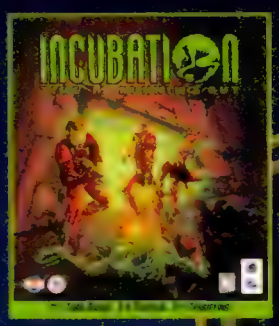
Computer Games
2 Millet St.
Richmond, VT 05477
ATTN: CD replacement

Missing Something?

If you are not getting the CD-ROM with your subscription to Computer Games Strategy Plus you are missing great demos and free games every month. You can upgrade your current subscripion for only $1 more per issue. Visa or Mastercard are accepted, please call:

Customer Service
1.800.283.3542 (US Only)
1.760.745.2809 (CDN and foreign)

Wanna Get Your Hands On These?



ALBION

BATTLE ISLE 2220 SHADOW OF THE EMPEROR

CYCLEMANIA Esc from F5

DR. DARGOS HEADCAP CHASE

The Settlers II MISSION CD

The Settlers II VENI VIDI VICI

For a piece of the action, go to www.bluebyte.com. I'll show you games that will get your heart racing at prices which will put a smile on your face. If you can't visit me, call (800) 933-2983.

I'm waiting...

Awards Our Games Have Won:

preferred

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Blue Byte Software, Inc. 870 E. Higgins Road, Suite 143, Schaumburg, IL 60173
© 1997 Blue Byte Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Source Code # MP2399

Blue Byte

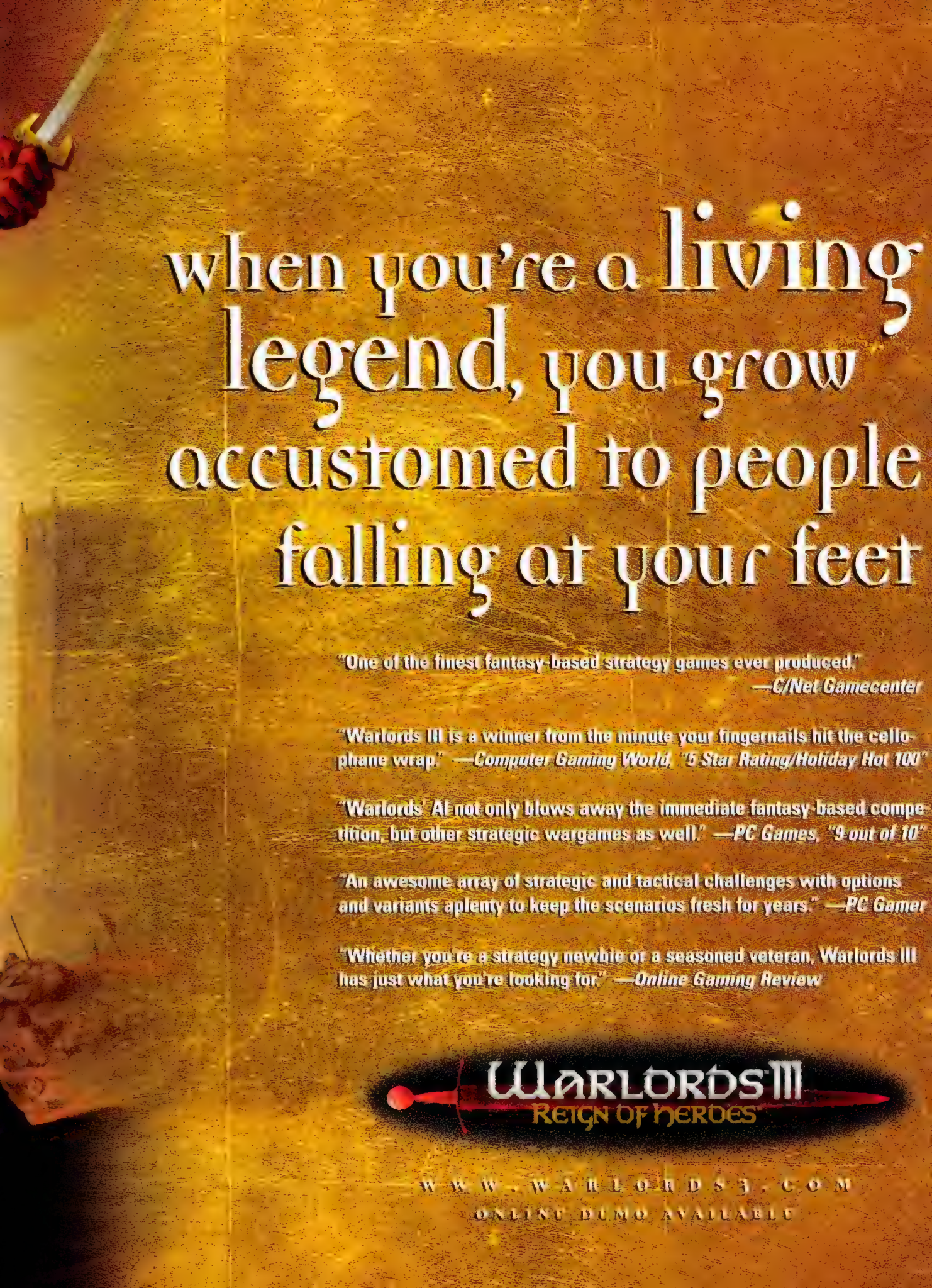
DEVELOP HEROES, CAST HORRIFIC SPELLS AND LEAD YOUR ARMIES TO VICTORY!

- Real-time simultaneous movement mode for up to 8 players
- More than 80 animated creatures and warriors
- Countless spells, abilities, and rewards
- AI which monitors your every tendency and plots elaborate strategies against you
- Full campaign and random map generator

REDORB

SSG

©1998 Broderbund Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Warlords is a trademark of SSG. Reign of Heroes and Red Orb Entertainment are trademarks of Broderbund Software, Inc.


when you're a living legend, you grow accustomed to people falling at your feet
"One of the finest fantasy-based strategy games ever produced." —C/Net Gamecenter
"Warlords III is a winner from the minute your fingernails hit the cellophane wrap." —Computer Gaming World, "5 Star Rating/Holiday Hot 100"
"Warlords' AI not only blows away the immediate fantasy based competition, but other strategic wargames as well." —PC Games, "9 out of 10"
"An awesome array of strategic and tactical challenges with options and variants aplenty to keep the scenarios fresh for years." —PC Gamer
"Whether you're a strategy newbie or a seasoned veteran, Warlords III has just what you're looking for." —Online Gaming Review
WARLORDS III
REIGN OF HEROES
WWW.WARLORDS3.COM
ONLINE DEMO AVAILABLE

WWW.CDMAG.COM

COMPUTER GAMES online

CONTENTS

The web's best computer game coverage... every day

Demos • Contests • Archives • Chat • Forums

Exclusive online content

Previews
Everquest Tanarus

Reviews
SmartGames 2
Hoyle Classic Board Games
Mageslayer
3-D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent
Sand Warriors
SWIV 3D Assault

Tips
Sid Meier's Gettysburg!
Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far
Armored Fist 2
Incubation
Panzer General II
Temüjin
Dark Earth
Fallout
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny
Zork Grand Inquisitor
Myth: The Fallen Lords

Advertiser's web index

Page number	Company	Address
120	Access	www.accesssoftware.com
34	Activision	www.activision.com
66-67	ASC Games	www.ascgames.com
6-7	Blizzard	www.blizzard.com
11	Blue Byte	www.bluebyte.com
116-117	Chips & Bits	www.cdmag.com/chips.html
133	Columbia House	www.columbiahouse.com
4-5, 112-113, 138-139, backcover	Eidos	www.eidos.com
2-3	GT Interactive	www.gtinteractive.com
126	Intense Entertainment	www.intense.com
76-77, 87, 89, 91	Interactive Magic	www.imagicgames.com
15, 40-41, 46-49, 71, 82-83, 101-103, 106-107, 135	InterPlay	www.interplay.com
54-55, 118, 125	Kesmai	www.kesmai.com
58-59	LucasArts	www.lucasarts.com
52	MCI	www.wireplay.mci.com
81	Media Station	www.extremetactics.com
75	Metropolis Digital	www.metro3d.com
9, 16-17, 42-43, 62-63, 78	Microprose	www.microprose.com
92-93, 98-99, 110-111, 137	Microprose	www.microprose.com
19-21	New World	www.3do.com
114	NRI Schools	
121	Ocean	www.oceanltd.com
94-95	Panasonic	www.ripcordgames.com
90	Pandemonium	
12-13	Red Orb	www.redorb.com
23-25	Segasoft	www.segasoft.com
27	Sierra	www.sierra.com
96	SouthPeak	www.southpeak.com
60, 72-73	SSI	www.ssionline.com
130	Strategy Plus	www.cdmag.com
30-31, 36-37	Take Two	www.take2games.com
85	Talonsoft	www.talonsoft.com
29	Techmedia	www.techmedia.net
57	WizardWorks	www.wizworks.com

Grade A "Play it: It goes where no Star Trek game has gone before"

—PC Games

Rated 9.0 "Starfleet Academy goes where no Star Trek game has gone before... an excellent game"
—Ultra Game Players

4 out of 5 stars "It warps past any other Star Trek game"
—GamerzEdge

Fly up to four Federation starships against 30 amazing 3-D polygon alien ships

Starring William Shatner, Walter Koenig and special appearance by George Takei in their legendary roles of Captain Kirk, Commander Chekov and Captain Sulu

LOOK FOR
Star Trek: Starfleet Academy Mission Pack
COMING THIS SPRING
STAR TREK: Pinball
AVAILABLE NOW

Enroll Now!

AVAILABLE NOW FOR WIN95 AND MACINTOSH.
COMING SOON FOR PLAYSTATION GAME CONSOLE.

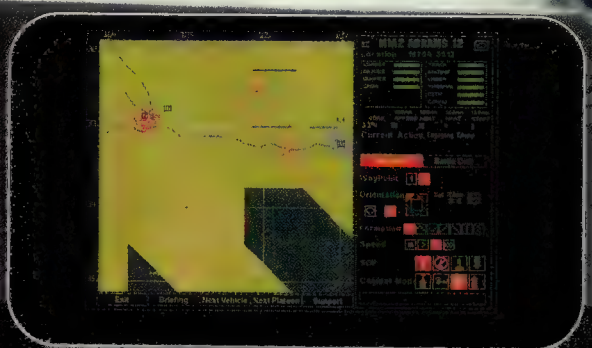
Developed and Published by
Interplay
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.

WWW.INTERPLAY.COM
WWW.MACPLAY.COM
1-800-INTERPLAY
(1-800-468-3775)

Starfleet Academy Software ©1997 Interplay Productions. Trademark and ©1997 Paramount Pictures. All rights reserved. Star Trek, Starfleet Academy and related trademarks are trademarks of Paramount Pictures. Interplay, the Interplay Logo, MacPlay, the MacPlay logo and "By Gamers. For Gamers." are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. PlayStation and the PlayStation logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Windows® 95 is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All other copyrights and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

IT'S OPENING NIGHT IN THE THEATER OF BATTLE...

AND YOU'VE GOT A FRONT ROW



SEAT.

M1 TANK PLATOON II

©1998 MicroProse Software, Inc. All rights reserved. M1 Tank Platoon is a registered trademark of MicroProse Software, Inc.

From the creators of the award-winning classic M1 Tank Platoon comes the most realistic armored land combat simulation anywhere in the world. M1 Tank Platoon II.

- Everything here is hyper-real. The detailed cockpits, the thermal view, the trees, the forests and even the helicopters that intelligently hide behind hills. In fact, it's as close as you can get to 70 different ground and air vehicles and their weapons systems without being classified.
- You're in complete control of four M1A2 Abrams tanks in both the gunner and commander positions. Test your prowess in first-hand combat or command formations by issuing battle orders and setting waypoints from the map view.
- Command platoons in dynamic campaigns set in Iraq, North Africa, the Russian Far East and Central Europe. Every mission is random and dictated by your strategic mastery from previous missions. The good news is as platoons experience tough combat, they'll serve you better.
- Faceoff against the enemy as you and your fellow tank commanders engage in a multiplayer battle that will blow you away.

RP

MICROPROSE

www.microprose.com

The World Exclusive Scoop

Where most of these editorials talk about issues in gaming, this month I'm going to talk a little about the magazine industry. We've commissioned studies that inform us that many of you consult multiple sources for your computer game coverage. If this is indeed true, you may have noticed a rather unusual phenomenon that appears to be "exclusive," if you'll excuse the term in relation to the discussion that follows, to this industry.

How many "World Exclusive Scoops" were there on *Quake II*? One month it's a "Scoop" in one magazine and the next it's a "World Exclusive" in another, never mind the 19 "Exclusive" web site previews. What makes this an even bigger mystery is the fact the game was shown publicly to the press and attendees of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in June.

To take another example, how many "Exclusives" were there on *Wing Commander Prophecy* in everyone's October issue? How many "Exclusive" *Sin* covers have there been? If you follow any number of magazines you'll find this phenomenon seems somehow limited to our industry. What exactly is going on here?

People talk a lot about game companies hyping their products by using flashy boxes or catchy advertisements to grab your attention and force you to plunk down your hard earned cash on the product. Magazines are no different – we're selling and we need you to buy. For a magazine, it's as difficult to sell integrity and honesty as it is for a game company to sell a challenging AI and elegant design, so the focus tends to be on simple concepts that are easy to grasp. For games, it's graphics and sound – "Eye-popping 16-bit color graphics! Teeth-rattling sound!" For magazines, it's the merits of individual articles.

It's not easy to sell the content of an article, especially when your magazine is stuck in a plastic bag that protects the valuable CD-ROM. To get around this problem, we take the easy way out – we "hype" the content using as many vacuous and meaningless terms as possible. For example, plastering "Killer Graphics" in huge type across a cover can't be called subtle. (For those who missed that reference, that was the cover line on the January issue of this magazine). Studies show that consumers spend a few seconds scanning magazines, so the verbiage used on the cover is of great importance. In this particular case, we did draw the line at claiming that article was an "exclusive" or a "scoop," as it clearly wasn't.

If a company decides that the readers of a certain publication are important enough that they entrust the information about their product to a single source in a given month, there's nothing wrong with that. If this is indeed the case, you should use that fact to help draw attention to the article in question and that issue of the magazine. However, before making that claim, its accuracy should be verified, just like every other factual statement in any given issue. It's a lot of work, but such is the burden of being a journalist. Frankly it's questionable whether or not it's worth it, which is the $6.95 question.

In the strictest sense of the word, every article in a magazine or on a web site is an exclusive since that exact article can't be found elsewhere. With that definition in mind, clearly we're all free to tell our readers we have an exclusive story even when the information is available elsewhere. And when you see the exact same information elsewhere, maybe it won't register that you've already seen this before, or you'll think, "I guess two people had an exclusive." Or more ominously, you could think, "Hmm, if they didn't get the exclusive and they seem to be stretching the truth a bit just to hype their magazine, are they doing that elsewhere in their previews or reviews?" It's incredibly difficult to balance the selling of a magazine without selling out the magazine.

In the end, trying to pass of an article as containing exclusive information when it in fact does not is engaging in self-promotion at the expense of accuracy, which in journalism is crossing the line. Publications and journalists are constantly trying to maintain their credibility because without it, everything printed is ultimately rendered meaningless.

–Steve Bauman, Editor

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

Publisher **Yale Brozen**
Editor **Steve Bauman**
Associate Editors **Scott Udell, Cindy Yans**
Production Director **Ed Mitchell**
Creative Director **David Powell**
Art Director **Terri Davis**
Technical Director **Doug Davenport**

Computer Games Online
www.cdmag.com

Director **Liz Halgas**
Editor **Robert Mayer**
News Editor **Jason Ocampo**
Administrator **Spencer Mitchell**
HTML Specialist **Jesse Isaacson**

Ad Director **Russ Hoefer**
Tel: 847-441-6452
Fax: 847-441-6584

Regional Advertising Managers **Jeff Mather**
East Coast, Midwest
Tel: 802 767-9144 X531
Fax: 802 767-1124

Jeff Lubetkin
AZ, NM, NV, S. CA, TX
Tel: 818 222-7516
Fax: 818 222-7518

Pete Abruzzo
IL, N. CA, OR, UT, ID, WA, N.W. Canada
Tel: 847-441-6473
Fax: 847-441-6584

Circulation Director **Alan Brush**
Subscription Manager **Tina White**

Reprints available. Foreign reprint rights available
US Subscriptions **Tel: 800 283-3542 or 760-745-2809**
Fax: 760-745-7200
P.O. Box 469074
Escondido, CA 92046

One year (12 issues) without/with CD-ROM
Basic subscription rates **US: $9.95/$19.95**
Canada: $21.95/$31.95
Foreign: $33.95/$43.95 (US)

Distributors UK **Comag: Tel: 0895-444055**
US **Curtis Circulation: Tel: 201-634-7400**
Ingram **Tel: 800-627-6247**

Editorial Offices **2 Millet Street, Unit 2**
Richmond, VT 05477
Tel: 802-434-3060
FAX: 802-434-6493

Editorial e-mail **editor@cdmag.com**
Subscription e-mail **subscriptions@cdmag.com**
CD Tech Support e-mail **cgcdtech@cdmag.com**

Back issues available from **Tel: 800-699-4263**

© 1997 Strategy Plus, Inc. All rights reserved.
Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Reproduction permission requests must be submitted in writing to Russ Hoefer, 550 Frontage Road, #3520, Northfield, IL 60093, 847-441-6452. Unsolicited submissions become the property of Strategy Plus, Inc. If you wish to make a submission, please contact the editors.

We use HyperSnap DX exclusively to capture screens from Windows 95 games (it works with DirectX). It's available from Hyperionics, www.hyperionics.com.

BPA

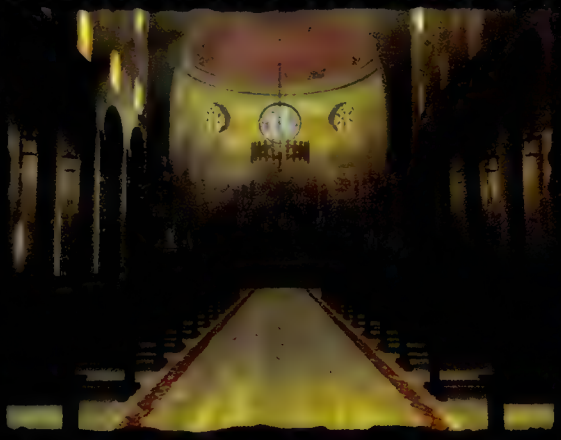
Some Say Role Playing Is Dead...

NEW WORLD COMPUTING®

A DIVISION OF THE 3DO COMPANY

Rebirth of a Legend.

THE IRONFIST DYNASTY TOTTERS ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION. EMBARK ON A PERILOUS ADVENTURE TO SAVE PRINCE NIKOLAI'S KINGDOM FROM TOTAL RUIN. FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE DEEPEST DUNGEONS TO THE INTRIGUES OF THE ROYAL COURT YOU WILL LEAD A BAND OF ADVENTURERS ON AN AMAZING JOURNEY OF DEPTH AND INTELLIGENCE.



CONTROL YOUR OWN DESTINY IN A NON-LINEAR FANTASY WORLD WHERE NOTHING IS PREORDAINED.

CHOOSE WHETHER TO PLAY IN REAL-TIME OR TURN-BASED COMBAT MODE.

ENGAGE IN HUNDREDS OF ENTERTAINING MINI-QUESTS THAT BRANCH OFF FROM THE MAIN SAGA.

EXPERIENCE BREATHTAKING 16-BIT, 65,000-COLOR GRAPHICS IN A SMOOTH-SCROLLING, HIGH-RES ENVIRONMENT.

Might and Magic® VI

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN

WWW.3DO.COM 800-251-9563

New World Computing, the New World Computing logo, and Might and Magic are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of The 3DO Company. © 1997 The 3DO Company. All rights reserved.

The Ratings Game

Understanding those little squares

In its third annual report card on the video and computer game industry, the National Institute on Media and the Family (along with Senators Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl) gave the industry an A for its rating systems. "Virtually all computer and video games now carry the ratings on the box," the report said. However, on the enforcement of those ratings, the report card gave a C. "Only four of the 20 stores surveyed had any policy preventing children from buying or renting 'mature' games."

The rating of games goes back to 1994, when Senate hearings were held on the violence prevalent in video and computer games. The hearings, chaired by Lieberman and Kohl, prompted the industry to create a labeling system for games. The ESRB was formed by the Interactive Digital Software Association and the RSAC by an alliance led by the Software Publishers Association.

Established in 1994, the ESRB has been the busier of the two rating systems. Software companies deliver their products to the ESRB, which has a pool of more than 100 "demographically diverse" individuals. Three of those individuals get the product and within seven days return a rating. The average of the three reports determines the game's actual rating.

The ESRB uses Rating Categories along with Content Discriptors. Games may be rated from "Early Childhood" to "Kids to Adults" to "Teen" to "Mature" to "Adults Only." Content Descriptors further elaborate on a game's rating. For example, a Content Descriptor of "Realistic Blood and Gore" means that there are "representations of blood and/or gore in realistic or photographic-like detail."

The Washington D.C.-based RSAC takes a different approach. Rather than depend on a pool of raters, the RSAC system instead tasks the companies to evaluate their own games. Companies receive a Ratings Questionnaire Kit and fill it in. They then submit it to RSAC along with a standard fee. A few days later, RSAC sends the company the appropriate rating label.

To keep companies honest, RSAC relies on a public rating system. The questionnaire that companies fill out has very detailed definitions to ensure that any two individuals who evaluate a game come up with identical ratings. Moreover, an open system ensures that any company that misrepresents a product will be caught immediately.

"It's in no one's best benefit to cheat," said Scott Greenbaum of RSAC. He described the system as a self-policing one, which makes it attractive to some companies. "Ours is a self-regulated system; the companies we're dealing with want to make sure they are in control."

Both Lisa Schnapp of the ESRB and Greenbaum of the RSAC said that there was a simple justification for both ratings systems: to keep the industry free of government regulation. However, there is another reason why companies want ratings on their games: to get their games in the stores. Retailers such as Wal-Mart and Toys R Us refuse to carry games without labels. ("They are looking to protect themselves," Greenbaum said.) In more than 3,500 product ratings, both Schnapp and Greenbaum said they could not recall any company ever appealing a rating.

That poses an interesting question: are ratings simply a symbolic gesture to keep the industry self-regulated? Revenues for movies will sometimes hinge upon the rating they're given. Are ratings for games something that are actually taken into consideration by designers and producers?

For *Fallout* designer Chris Taylor, at least, that answer is a yes. Taylor said that he and his team "sat down towards the beginning of the design process and decided that we would do a Mature game. We went ahead and added the Violence Setting and Language Filter preferences, because, as developers, we want to give the user control over those aspects of the game. We certainly don't want us, or anyone else, telling a particular player what he can or can't see." In a role-playing game filled with gory ways to die, Taylor stated that "we probably went a little overboard on some things once we decided to not shoot for a Teen rating."

The most controversial game on the market today is Ripcord Games' *Postal*, a product that has merited two front page stories in *The Wall Street Journal* in the past year and has been removed from the nation's largest software retailer, CompUSA. According to Ripcord Marketing Director Sangita Verma, the company is very supportive of the ratings systems.

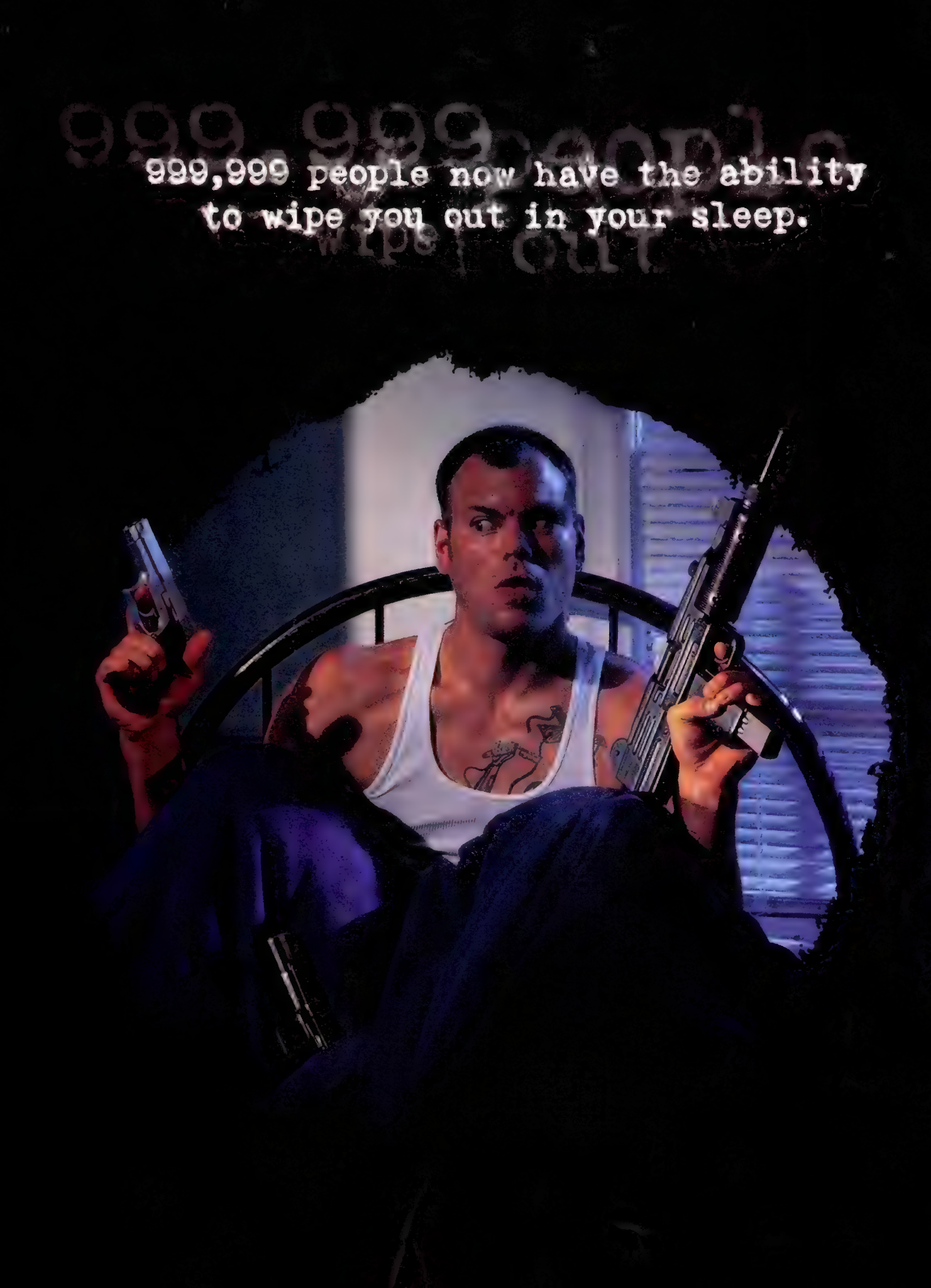
"The ratings system allow us to create products for age groups we may not have had the opportunity to create for otherwise," Verma said. "There would be more controversy without a rating system. As a parent, how would you know what games are appropriate for your children As an adult, how would you find mature entertainment games?"

Do ratings cost sales? According to Verma, no. She explained that since *Postal* was targeted already at players over 18, the Mature rating the game received from the ESRB did not affect anything.

Does the existence of two separate rating systems cause any conflicts? Neither Schnapp and Greenbaum saw any friction in the existing system, and both said both systems have accomplished what they set out to do.

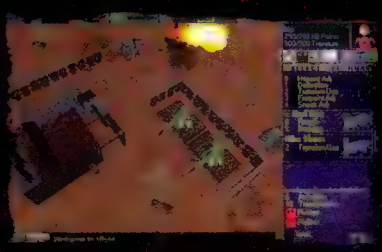
As Greenbaum put it, "We wanted to make sure that people making games were responsible for rating their own games." *–Jason Ocampo*

999,999 people now have the ability
to wipe you out in your sleep.

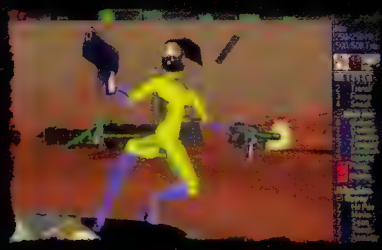


©1997 SegaSoft Networks, Inc. 10th Kingdom logo, HEAT, and the HEAT logo are trademarks of SegaSoft Networks, Inc. All rights reserved. Titanvictor and the Titanvictor logo are trademarks of Pixelwave, Inc. PostLinear and the PostLinear logo are trademarks of PostLinear, Inc. ©1997 3Dfx Interactive, Inc. The 3Dfx Interactive logo is a trademark of 3Dfx Interactive, Inc. All rights reserved.

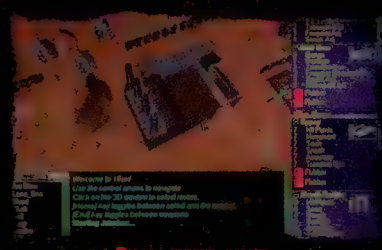
ATTACK IN FIRST-PERSON MODE.



TOP-DOWN DEFENSE MODE.



ALLY OR ENEMY?



REAL-TIME CHAT.

STAKE YOUR CLAIM IN THE WORLD'S FIRST MILLION PLAYER GAME.

Good morning neighbor: Welcome to your new home — an energy-rich planetoid that has just entered our solar system. With its arrival comes your opportunity to claim an unspoiled plot of land. You own it. You mine it. You defend it. And if you do not heed the warnings that follow, you may be forced to surrender it.

A WORLD THAT NEVER SLEEPS.

10SIX is a persistent realm existing 24 hours a day at HEAT.NET. A world where combat and conquest never end. Where building alliances and an impervious defense are your only hope of quelling the opposition. The action never stops. Even after you log off, the energy you've mined, the weapons you've acquired, and the land you've worked so hard to develop remain in the game. Call it home. Call it Hell. Just don't call it a night.

INTRODUCING REAL-WORLD COMMERCE WITH TRANSACTOR™.

Build upon your start-up arsenal with the revolutionary Transactor™ technology. Win new possessions surrendered in the heat of battle. Trade items with other players. Or simply purchase the articles you need - just like in the real world. Limited-edition digital weapons, equipment and power-ups are now yours to buy, sell, trade or lose. The stakes are high. But also, just like life, so are the rewards.

COMING IN MAY 1998

TO YOUR LOCAL COMPUTER SOFTWARE RETAILER.

WWW.10SIX.COM

EXCLUSIVELY ON HEAT.NET

Buy 10six at retail and play it exclusively on the HEAT.NET Internet Game Network. Earn frequent player points ("degrees") that you can use to buy limited edition digital weapons, equipment and power-ups. Redeem your extra degrees for free games and merchandise in HEAT's online store.

Are you in HEAT? You should be! For more information on the game network where you can play all your favorite games against live competition for free, check out www.heat.net.

COMPETE ON HEAT HEAT.NET

10SIX

OWN.
MINE.
DEFEND.
ATTACK.
PILLAGE.
REPEAT.

Interstate '76 Nitro Pack

Return to the polyester hell that was the '70s

Skeeter approaches the wreckage in his souped-up van

FIRST LOOK RETURN TO THOSE boogie nights of lore with the *Interstate '76 Nitro Pack*, a stand-alone product that will allow you to control Taurus, Jade and Skeeter in 20 new single-player and 25 multi-player missions. There will be nine new cars joining the muscle-car ranks, including the Leopard and the Ransom Enforcer. A few more goofy vehicles will be present too, ranging from an ambulance to a hearse. Six new weapons will be featured, including a chemical grenade launcher, the legendary "Ball O' Flame," the lovely "4 Get-U-Not" missile and that old crowd favorite, the Caltrops.

In response to fans' requests, new multi-player missions are being created, including the stalwart Capture the Flag and pure racing mode. Additionally, the host computer can limit the weapons used in the mission and set time and kill limits. A new option to toggle the instrument panel in all external views proves to be a bit weird when you're playing the game, but perhaps you'll get used to it. You can now set the difficulty levels (from "wimp" to "badass") and there will be the usual complement of new funk-filled tunes.

The new Ransom Enforcer, in lovely green, takes on the bad guys

The 3D engine, which came under fire for being a poor performer in the original game, has been optimized and will support 3D acceleration out of the box. The game will also patch the original *Interstate '76*, giving owners of that game all of the visual and speed enhancements. Support for force-feedback devices will ship with the game as well.

Carrying a suggested retail price of only $29, the *Nitro Pack* should be out in early February. *–Steve Bauman*

Interstate '76 Nitro Pack • Activision • Windows 95

Voodoo 2 bandwagon–Among the hardware makers who announced accelerators based on 3Dfx Interactive's Voodoo 2 chipset are Guillemot International, Jazz Multimedia, Creative Technology and Diamond Multimedia... **AMD Allies with DreamWorks, Digital Anvil**–Hardware manufacturer AMD locked up partnerships with both DreamWorks Interactive and Digital Anvil. Both developers will optimize their titles for AMD's new AMD-3D Technology... **Ultima Online sets a record**–Origin says that more than 65,000 copies of *Ultima Online* have been purchased since Sept. 25, making the game the fastest seller in the company's 15-year history... **Wing Commander on**

The War of the Worlds

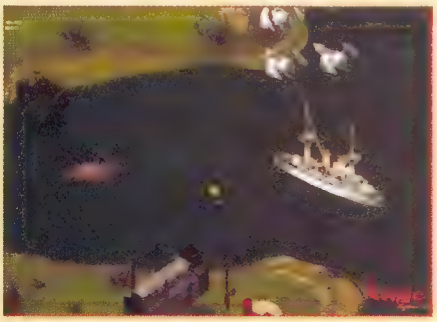
If H.G. Wells could only see it

"Head 'em off at the pass!"

FIRST LOOK WHAT BETTER WAY to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of one of sci-fi's classic titles than with a computer game? That's just what GT Interactive and developer Rage Software are planning to do with their upcoming title, *The War of the Worlds*. Desperate to escape a dying homeworld, Martians set their sights on nice, cushy Earth, and D-Day is set to August 10, 1898, Earth-calendar. Rather foolishly, they decide to take on the toughest power of the day, the British Empire, landing right on the Home Island itself.

Okay, okay, the setting's a little corny, but at least it's a different twist away from the norm of other real-time strategy games. While it's obviously based on the book it also ties-in with the sci-fi album of the same name that was released by Jeff Wayne in 1978. Wayne is going to produce some 45 minutes of new music for the game, which should help provide some immediate familiarity for fans of the record.

Those of us who haven't heard the record, however, will likely focus on the game itself. The Martians are more technologically advanced, but not nearly as numerous as the forces of the verminous Earthlings. Vehicles and objects are 3D and texture-mapped, and the terrain is based on the geography of Britain. Graphics techno-buzzwords abound: "dynamic particle system," "fully light-sourced environments," and "ambient and directional lighting" all promise plenty for the cravers of eye candy.



The best in 1898 Earth technology... against a space-faring race?

Refreshingly unusual for this type of game is the lack of pre-set missions; according to GT, "all game play is completely non-linear and determined by the player." The larger conflict is tracked through a complete 24 hour clock (rather like *X-COM*), so battles might happen at night. Like other games of the genre you'll be able to perform research, development, and production, but combat is primary. Once finished wiping out the AI, you can take on a friend via network play. GT says the game should ship sometime this coming summer. *–Scott Udell*

The War of the Worlds • GT Interactive • Windows 95

GET INSIDE

BABYLON 5

Set course with Captain John Sheridan, Ambassador Delenn and the dwellers of Babylon 5 for a tour unlike any other. Created with J. Michael Straczynski and Babylonian Productions, this interactive reference guide is loaded with hundreds of photos, sound and video clips - from the inner workings of the space station to the outer reaches of the galaxy. You'll learn so much about the ships, weapons, inhabitants and history of "Babylon 5", that you'll be ready to sign on for a tour of duty.

Available NOW! Mac & PC

See your software retailer or call 1-800-757-7707.

www.sierra.com/babylon5

The Official Guide to J. Michael Straczynski's Babylon 5

BONUS! Includes an enhanced "Best of Babylon 5" music CD by Christopher Franke!

SIERRA

SONIC IMAGES

KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

©1997 Sierra On-Line Inc., Bellevue, WA 98007. ® and ™ designate trademarks of, or licensed to, Sierra On-Line, Inc. All rights reserved. BABYLON 5™ and © 1997 Warner Bros.

Descent: FreeSpace

The spaceship-crawl heads for the great outdoors

FIRST LOOK WHILE DOOM AND *Quake* get all of the acclaim, *Descent* may have been just as deserving of respect. A large and devoted group of fans continuously sing its praises and have developed a number of add-on products for it, but its overall popularity never seemed to reach the critical mass of *Doom* or *Quake*.

Attempting to broaden the game's base, *Descent: FreeSpace – The Great War* takes the battle into, erm, free space. The single-player version of the game is being designed like a pseudo-dynamic campaign, with multiple possible outcomes for each mission. Additionally, your performance on early missions can have an impact on future ones; obviously, play balancing this kind of structure will take some work to avoid the game getting too easy or hard as the game progresses. Of course multiplayer play isn't being neglected – the plan is to ship with 16-player network support out of the box.

Ships appear well-detailed

Look, it's Deep Space Nine™

The version of the game supplied by Interplay for this sneak-peak wasn't playable, but the trailer uses the game's 3D engine to display various battle scenes. The ships are well-detailed and though 3D support wasn't yet enabled, the angular, polygonal look of *Descent* is oddly appealing when taken outside.

Whether fans of the series will really prefer to get spaced out(side), rather than spaced in(side) will be determined when *Descent: FreeSpace* is released in April. *–Steve Bauman*

Descent: FreeSpace—The Great War • Interplay • Windows 95

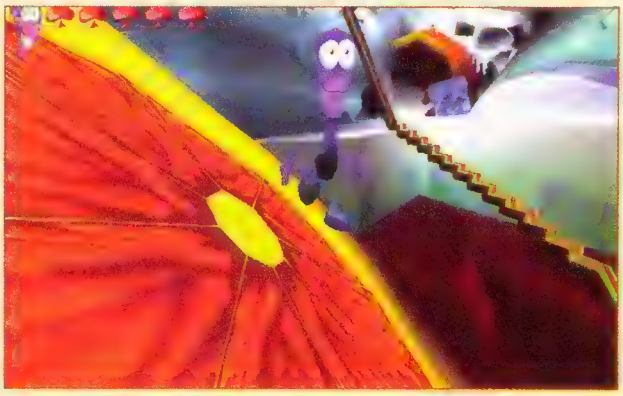
film–Electronic Arts granted the *Wing Commander* film and television rights to Digital Anvil, which is led by *Wing Commander* creator Chris Roberts… **CUC online**–CUC Software, parent company of Sierra On-Line and Blizzard Entertainment, will launch a free online game service next year known as WonNet… **Psygnosis partners with Newman/Haas**–Psygnosis has signed a licensing agreement with the Newman/Haas Racing team to produce *Newman/Haas Racing*, a title that will feature drivers Christian Fittipaldi and Michael Andretti… **The Full Monty**–Panasonic has acquired the exclusive North American rights for all of the 7th Level Monty Python computer products…■

Tonic Trouble

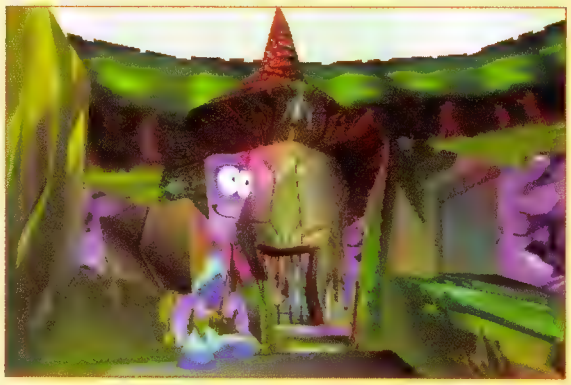
Return to the land of the limb-less

FIRST LOOK IN TONIC TROUBLE you're Ed, one of those cute little extra-terrestrial beings that never gets mentioned on *The X-Files* (discrimination!). Ed drops a mysterious can that unleashes a series of mutations that affect various flora and fauna in the world. Ed is forced to rescue the can from Grogh the Hellish while fighting off killer vegetables and visiting a village of CD worshippers and a desert of upside-down pyramids. Is this making sense?

If this seems like the sort of premise that could only be developed by a French company, you'd be right. France's UbiSoft is taking great pains to make *Tonic Trouble* strange and psychedelic, and it's clear this game has some of the same surreal qualities that makes their smash hit *Rayman* so weird, such as characters with no limbs – just hands – and bizarre environments.



Ed makes his way through the land of the giant orange slices



A goofier world savior may never be found

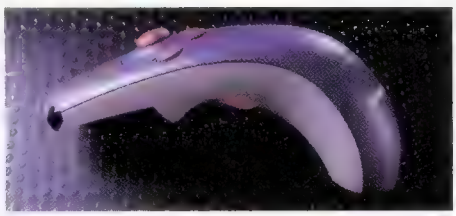
Much as they did with *POD*, UbiSoft is taking the high-performance road with *Tonic Trouble*, pushing it for 3D accelerators and Pentium II systems. While the gameplay is evocative of *Mario 64* or even *Tomb Raider*, UbiSoft is promising that their new "3D-integration engine" will allow characters to react, both visually (their expressions may change) as well as in their behavior (they may run away or mimic your character – imagine a giant carrot running and jumping and you'll have an idea what to expect).

Tune in, turn on and drop out when *Tonic Trouble* ships in early 1998. *–Steve Bauman*

Tonic Trouble • UbiSoft • Windows 95

Still using an 80's-style joystick designed for flight-simulation games? Or even worse, a keyboard? Maybe that's why legions of butt-ugly mutants are splattering your guts all over the galaxy before you advance even one level.

Don't crank-up the modem and start downloading game cheats. Just wrap your fist around Techmedia's 3DZoneMaster™ Ultrasonic Positioning Device and wield the power of this state-of-the-art 3D controller.



With 3DZoneMaster there are no wires and no clunky base. Nothing artificial to keep you from becoming immersed in the action. With its unique, patented ultrasonic tracking and ergonomic pistol-grip design, you move in three dimensions, effortlessly, fluidly, instinctively—without hand or arm fatigue.

The 3DZoneMaster includes an array of programmable multi-function buttons to let you command all the firepower each game has to offer. And it's ready out of the box with Windows95® drivers, Netscape Navigator,™ exciting games and a host of predefined game sets.

Push your skills to the next dimension! Play the latest 3D games the way the psycho inventors meant them to be played. Get into the action and call **1-800-379-0077** for the location of the Techmedia dealer nearest you.

Techmedia®
Unexpected Performance.
Unexpected Price.™

©1997. 3DZoneMaster is a trademark and the Techmedia name and logo are registered trademarks of Techmedia Computer Systems Corp. All other trademarks are the property of their respective companies

The conflict.

The leaders.

The planes.

The pilots.

Your choice.

JETFIGHTER FULLBURN

THE FLIGHT SIM WITH A STORY.

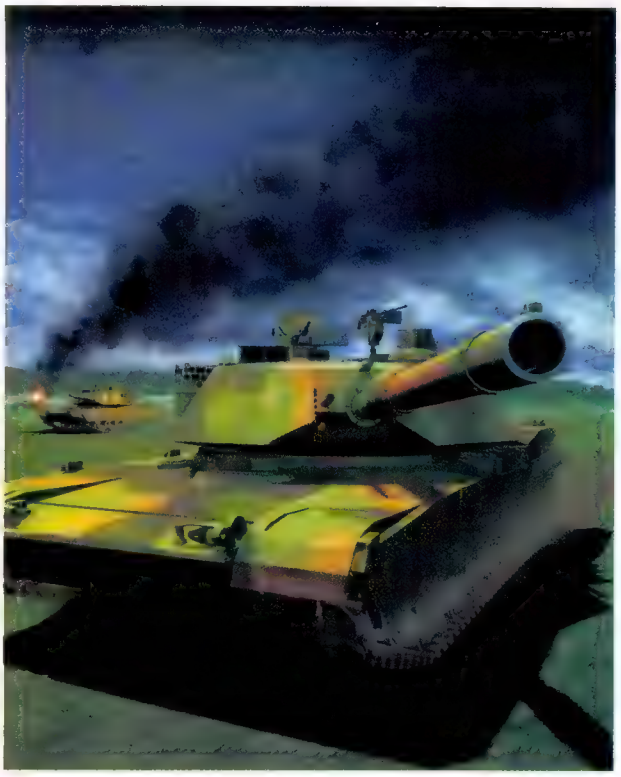
MISSION STUDIOS

Studios Corporation, a subsidiary of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

FIVE KINGS GATHER FOR BATTLE

A LOOK AT TANK SIMULATIONS FOR 1998

By Scott Udell



In military realms, the tank is often referred to as the King of the Battlefield. Depending on the terrain and the conflict, it often leads the way in any assault, punching a hole in enemy forces through which the combined might of an army can pour; it is also the premier tool for stopping the other side's tanks. Tanks, however, don't operate in a vacuum. When used intelligently as part of a well-trained combined arms force, they can be deadly indeed.

The representation of tanks in gaming during the past several years has been pretty much confined to wargames; that, however, is changing, with two tank simulations released in 1997 and 4-5 planned for 1998. Making use of the latest hardware, these games aim to give "treadheads" an experience like they've never had before. Be it modern tanks or historic, there's plenty in store for you, and we're here to give you a look at all five upcoming games.

M1 Tank Platoon II - The successor to the king of tank sims

MicroProse • Windows 95

One of the technological stars of the Gulf War was the Army's M1 Abrams, the tank that brought the US to the forefront of armored warfare for perhaps the first time in its history. That it was such a star was probably of no surprise to legions of gamers who had played MicroProse's original *M1Tank Platoon* (which came out before the war). In its own way, the game was as much of a star as the tank it portrayed; even today, after several more "modern" sims, many still regard it as the king of the tank sims. MicroProse aims to keep said throne in the family and is grooming an in-house successor in the form of *M1 Tank Platoon II*. Previewed back in our October '97 issue [*CGS+ 83, pg. 102*], we wanted to bring you a more detailed look as the game got further along; we recently spent several days with an early version of the game and talked with Producer Scott Spanberg and Lead Designer Tim Goodlett to get their thoughts on the title.

A look at The King

The core of the game is of course the M1A2 itself. As discussed in our preview, the -A2 variant adds two very important electronics systems to the M1 family: the Commander's Independent Thermal Viewer (CITV) and the Inter-Vehicular Information System (IVIS, which will also be added to other US vehicles). The CITV allows the commander to better scout the area around the tank from the buttoned position, creating in essence a hunter-killer team with the gunner: the commander finds and designates targets, and the gunner kills them. As with earlier versions of the M1, the commander also has an extension of the Gunner's Primary Sight (GPS), and can use this to both see what the gunner is targeting and to, if necessary, override the gunner and aim and fire himself (he may also use the CITV for this). With CITV and IVIS, there's no longer any room in an M1A2 for the equipment that allowed

the commander to aim and shoot his .50 cal while buttoned, so the buttoned view allows you to just look through the vision blocks.

Positions in the game are portrayed in what MicroProse calls a "Virtual Cockpit" – actual photos of the interior of the tank that you can transition smoothly between. From the commander's station you can slide down into the gunner's position. This is a tad different from the usual representation of the gunner's station – you don't get a nice window representing the GPS or the GAS (Gunner's Auxiliary Sight) views. In the actual tank the sights are just like those of a telescope—you've got to put your eye up to them, and when you do you really can't see the rest of the controls. Never fear, though, as an "eye-to-the-scope" view is available and is actually larger than that given in most other sims.

A position you do not see modeled is the driver's station. MicroProse decided to focus the sim portion on the command and fighting aspects of the tank, so the AI will take over the driver's role. When in "automatic" mode, the driver will follow the waypoints and SOPs (standard operating procedures) you set in the IVIS. You will also be able to take him out of automatic mode and issue specific instructions: turn left, turn right, turn to this heading, speed up, etc. In the original, one of the biggest reasons for driving the tank yourself was to get it into a safer "hull down" position from which to fight; MicroProse says the AI driver will, if available, seek out and automatically assume hull-down positions.

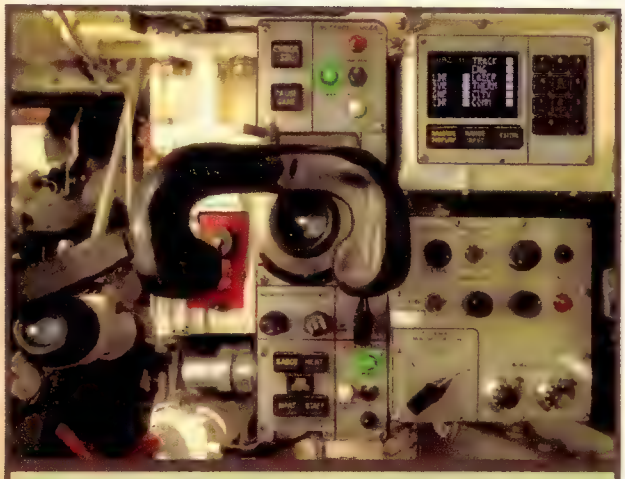
IVIS eyes

While in real life, the M1 of the original game didn't have such a device, MicroProse, for playability purposes, implemented a map mode with functionality very similar to the IVIS system that arrived for the M1A2. That mode is back in *M1 II*, but it's been expanded and refined. The IVIS of the real tank is a complete digital communications system; using it a commander and his subordinates and superiors can exchange information (especially location of enemy and friendly units), orders, and even maintenance and tank status information. The game represents the IVIS two ways: when you're in the Virtual Cockpit mode you see a small representation closer to the actual IVIS; it can give you a quick glimpse of the battlefield 360 degrees around you and your platoon. For more detailed command and control access, however, you switch to the full screen mode; while somewhat more detailed than the real IVIS display, it does help make up for the lack of "situational awareness," a problem present in most simulations.

In the original game, you could use the map mode to direct the raw movement of your forces and to get a good picture of what was going on. In the sequel they've expanded the functionality quite a bit, and you can now issue full waypoint and movement orders, including formation and speed during movement, time spent and action performed at each waypoint (hold fire, smoke, retreat, etc), and reaction orders for when an enemy is sighted. It may sound like a lot of work for the heat of battle, but a lot of this can be defined ahead of time before the battle is joined; set it all up and change what's needed as the battle progresses.

Friends to help in those tight spots

While the focus of the game is the Abrams, real battlefields don't have just friendly tanks, and neither do the ones in *M1 Tank Platoon II*. With some 80 vehicles and aircraft modeled in the version we used for this article, there is plenty to control and shoot at (see sidebar). Big changes for the sequel include the inclusion of Marine equipment, necessary if players choose to portray a Marine platoon (yes, *grognards*, the Marines may not have A2s yet, or may at least not yet be fully outfitted with



The gunner's position in the virtual cockpit; your main gunsight is accessed via the eyepiece in the center

The commander's position, with (left to right) the GPS extension, the CITV display, and the in-cockpit IVIS display

them, but by the time of the game's setting MicroProse is betting they will). The "bad guys" now have helicopters (currently four craft), and all helicopters or fixed-wing aircraft will behave more realistically – hiding, ducking under cover, using different approaches, etc. – than they did in the original game.

Some of this behavior is even apparent in our early version: instead of flying right up over the main battle, a group of Apaches hovered out at stand-off distance to engage the enemy. Appropriate vehicles in the enemy lineups now include reactive armor, missiles' seeker heads are modeled, and they've even included the Pioneer UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle), a very small, almost stealthy observation platform. Watch out for all these friends, however – fratricide can easily become a problem on a busy battlefield.

Vehicles aren't everything; while they can punch through enemy lines, it takes the grunts to really clear things out and to hold onto objectives once achieved, so the game expands upon this aspect of warfare. Once their vehicles reach position, infantry will deploy out of them, ready to fight. Once deployed, you can issue some orders to individual squads, but don't move them too far or too fast on foot – MicroProse has modeled infantry fatigue, and tired troops don't perform as well. Unlike other games, each individual soldier is modeled, both graphically and functionally. With the new weapons they carry, infantry can pack quite a punch if used correctly (the same is true for your enemies).

You can now command a Marine platoon through the campaigns; if you do, you'll get different supporting units like this Marine Cobra

Enemy equipment consists of Soviet or Russian vehicles – some old, some very new

A different kind of campaign trail

The game will include five different campaigns: a Second Gulf War, Libya vs. Egypt, Moldavia, Vladivostok, and central Poland; all campaigns are set roughly within the next five years or so. Any campaign can be played as a Marine, Armored, or Armored Cav unit; this will determine what supporting units and vehicles you might have, and should extend replayability.

According to Goodlett, "each campaign is fully dynamic." Campaign progression is based largely on player performance; if you "win really big really quick, the campaign will last eight to 10 missions, but can go as far as 30 before it will end itself." (This to avoid endless campaigns.) Missions are generated dynamically as well, with some 20 different possible combinations based on the larger campaign picture; just because you're on the offensive doesn't necessarily mean your opponent will be on the defensive. Indeed, Goodlett believes it's very possible you'll never see the same type of battle twice in a single campaign.

Aside from the campaigns there will be two sets of individual missions, one based on battles from the Gulf War and another based on a hypothetical NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict in central Europe. In addition, you'll get a group of training missions set at Fort Knox and at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin; says Goodlett, "Fort Knox is basically to show [the player] how to use the controls, the National Training Center is to show how to fight a battle. Both will also have multimedia tied in to help explain [the game] better to the player."

A random mission generator, based on what's used for the campaign system, should make it into the final game. This will let you set up and play an individual random mission once you've worked through the preset single missions. A mission editor is out for now; says Spanberg, "We gave some thought to the mission editor, and we just don't think we could get that done in time." Asked if this might be released in a future expansion he said "Perhaps."

Getting together for a little combat

Early on MicroProse was talking about eight-player multiplayer, but this has been changed to five via LAN (modem is of course two player). Goodlett says this was more a design decision than anything else; instead of setting up specific deathmatch or co-operative/team games, MicroProse decided to follow what they say is the approach taken by the Army's old SIMNET system: four players each assume control of an Abrams in a platoon while the fifth player acts as the opposing force's battle master (that player can't actually drive enemy tanks, but can direct unit movements via the map or follow along in 3D external views known in the military sim community as the "flying carpet" mode).

In an interview in June, a MicroProse representative was talking about letting gamers control the British Challenger or the German Leopard in head-to-head battles, but at this point it's uncertain whether they will be included in the final product or not. Even if they are, they will make use of the Abrams' Virtual Cockpit for convenience's sake.

Finalizing the battle plan

Currently the team is shooting for a 133MHz Pentium as a minimum system configuration; to help reach this goal Spanberg is still doing some of his development work on a 90MHz machine. As far as 3D acceleration, that's still a bit uncertain; says Spanberg, "I'm going to try my best to support 3Dfx; past that we'll see." Even at this beta stage it's arguable whether anyone with a system greater than (or even equal to) a 133MHz Pentium will even need 3D support, as the graphics in the game already look and perform better than anything previously released.

Asked for their final comments on the game, Spanberg reiterated what he told us back in August: "I think that our goal all along has been that we're making a sequel." He says that they've taken the feedback that gamers have given them over the years and added requested features where appropriate, but that they've tried to keep a similar design philosophy on the gameplay while bringing the engine up to modern standards. Goodlett adds that "there will be a lot of things that are really subtle. We're trying to surprise the player, where every now and then the bad guys will do something he just doesn't expect."

Perhaps the most telling thing about MicroProse's commitment to retaining their hold on this area of simulated warfare comes from a subtitle on some documentation they provided: "An AirLand Battle System Game." While we couldn't get any details on what exactly the AirLand Battle System is, Goodlett did admit that they're considering add-on products; if the royal family of tank sims can retain its crown, who knows where the kingdom might go next.

Despite having relatively poor tanks at the beginning of the war, the Germans were the most feared wielders of armor

Selecting German units in the scenario editor

Panzer Commander - Steppe-ing out in WW II

SSI • Windows 95

With all the emphasis these days on modern tank warfare and the M1A2 Abrams, fans of the "golden age" of armored warfare, World War II, may feel more than a little left out. You shouldn't, though, especially with the likes of Panzer Commander aiming to give you a gaming experience right out of time. We recently had a chance to talk with the producer of the game, SSI's Rick Martinez, and had a chance to spend some time with the first full beta of the game. Here's the report.

Life on the battlefield

Every major theatre of World War II saw tanks in action, but the major areas of armored conflict were North Africa and Europe (especially the Eastern Front). SSI aims to cover a large swathe of this realm of combat in *Panzer Commander*, with six countries (with driveable tanks from the four major ones: Germany, the Soviet Union, the US, and England, and non-driveable units from Poland and France) and campaigns from two of them (Germany and the Soviet Union). There will be six campaigns, each following the historical path taken by a specific tank unit. For the Germans these are the 2nd, 21st, and *Grossdeutschland* divisions (which technically isn't an armored division, but throughout most of the war it did have an attached armored unit that saw some very interesting actions). From the Soviet side you'll get to pick from the 5th Guards Tank Corps (really a heavy brigade), the 12th Guards Tank Corps, and the 8th Guards Tank Corps. No matter which unit you pick, you'll follow it through what is termed an "actual history experience," with realistic reorganizations and unit upgrades as the war progresses. Each campaign is broken into areas of operation; within each area you'll fight two to six battles, then move on (and forward into history).

You'll notice there is no U.S. campaign; Martinez explains the reasoning behind this: "[There are] two levels to it: it's not very exciting, in a realistic simulation, to be driving a Sherman… well, it's exciting in the wrong way – you die a lot. The brutal truth is, when it comes to 'sexy' tanks and effective armor, [the US is] not leading the league in WW II, and… we had terrible tank losses. We felt that for where it was at for armored warfare in WW II, we had to start with the two combatants that people think of when they think of armored warfare, and that would be the Russians and the Germans."

Note that he does not rule out a U.S. campaign in a future expansion; also, there will be plenty of solo battles with the game from the U.S. perspective, and with the editor gamers can create more. Currently the game's team is planning on 40 extra single missions (not missions from the campaigns), and a dozen or so designed specifically for online play. Some of these missions will be ahistorical; for example, U.S. and Soviet units fighting on the outskirts of Berlin in 1945.

The last WW II tank sim to reach gamers, MicroProse's *Across the Rhine*, caused quite a stir when it eliminated SS units from the mix. Asked about the SS controversy and how it would be handled in *Panzer Commander*, Martinez responded: "What we're going to do, and I'm very unapologetic about this, is not introduce any of the controversial elements of SS behavior, especially the rear formation units – no *Einsatztruppen*, [etc.]. Since we're not even doing an SS formation [in the campaign sets] – it just didn't seem to fit what we're doing." He continues: "Will a supporting SS unit show up in a scenario? I guess that's possible, depending on the historical situation – we're not going to change them because they're SS, I will not censor in that way (except for German and European release). If in the historical notes it says the SS were there helping, that's not going to go away."

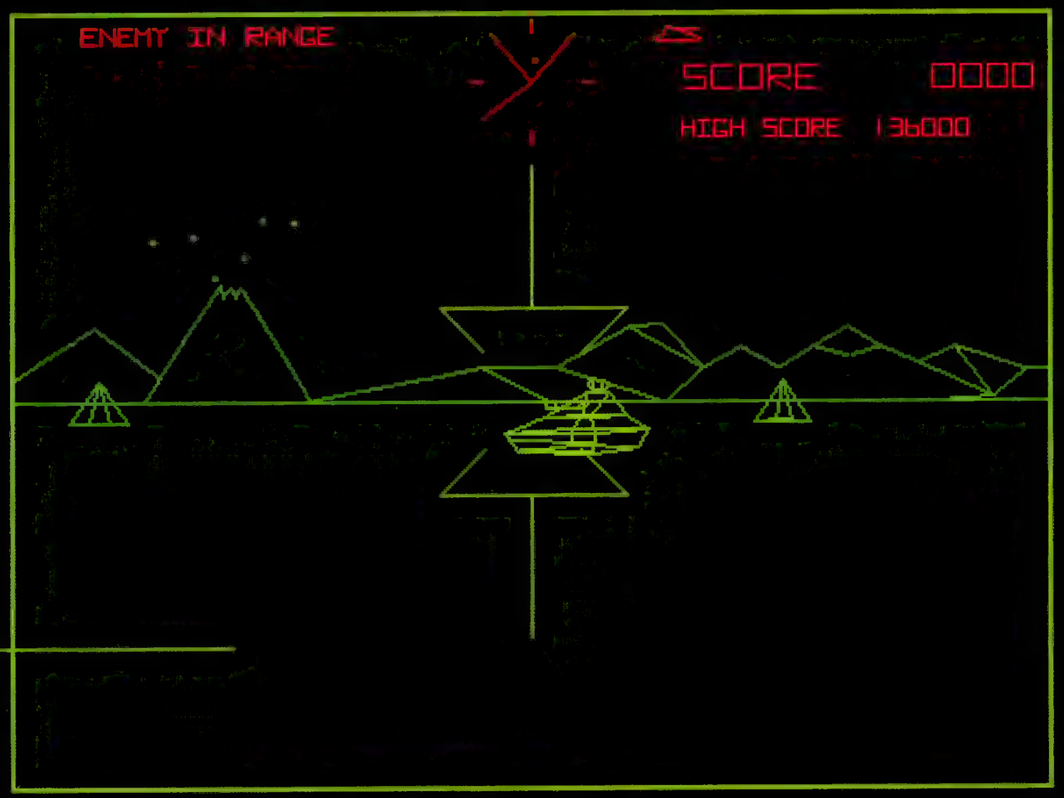
The TO&E

TO&E is short for Table of Organization and Equipment, a military term that encompasses, in part, the lists of military vehicles that a unit theoretically contains. The TO&Es in tank sims usually match those of real world units, but the TO&E list of fully simulated, controllable-by-the-user vehicles is often much shorter – often only one tank (e.g., the M1 Abrams). Not so for *Panzer Commander*, where each of the four powers will have 6-8 separate, controllable vehicles… and this *doesn't* include the variants of each; include those and the list of German vehicles, for example, grows from six to around 15. In addition to these driveable vehicles, SSI is including 30 other vehicles and objects, including artillery, tank destroyers, machine gun nests, infantry, and even off-map artillery and ground attack planes (see sidebar).

Each driveable vehicle includes interior stations built from the photographs taken from the vehicles themselves. One con-

In 1980,

Battlezone Put You in Command of a Tank.



ACTIVISION®

Battlezone™

Take Command on the Battlefield.

Solar Array: The Solar Array provides power to your factories, gun towers and other energy-intensive units.

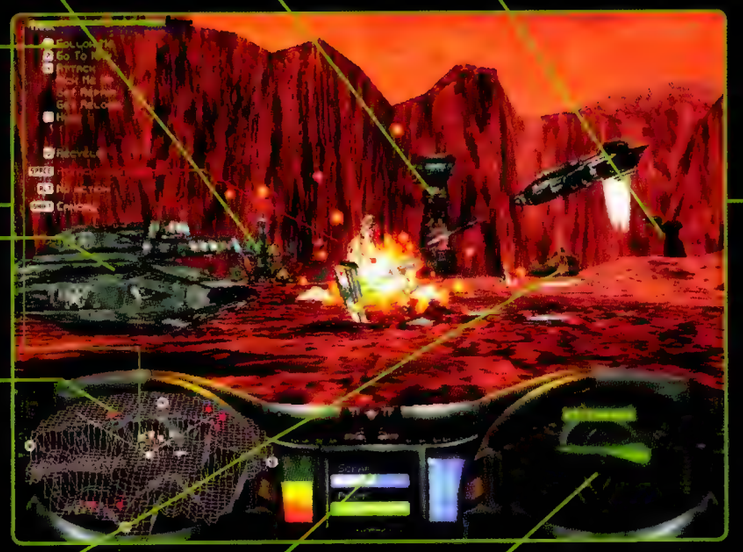
Radar Tower: The Radar Command Tower must be powered continuously to increase radar range and accuracy.

Gun Tower: The Gun Tower, though a devastating long-range defensive unit, must be powered by the vulnerable Solar Array.

Command System: An innovative menu system integrates troop and resource management for full control from the battlefield.

Grizzly Tank: Configure a Grizzly, the key American tank, right on the battlefield.

3-D Radar: A topographical 3-D radar displays your base location, unit placement, field of vision and enemy position.



Scavenger: Send your Scavenger to collect valuable Scrap. Gather from scrapfields or destroyed units on the battlefield.

Scrap Meter: The Scrap Meter measures the Scrap available for the Factories to build new units.

Weaponry: Spend resources to reconfigure your vehicle's weaponry on-the-fly in the midst of battle.

Multiplayer: Enter multiplayer battles in full Strategy mode over LAN, modem or Internet, or up to eight-player battles in Deathmatch mode.

Graphics: Features full D3D support and a fast software-rendering engine which incorporates actual footage from NASA space expeditions.

Campaigns: You decide which army to command: play either the Stars-and-Stripes or Red Brigade campaigns.

Pilots: Pilots are a resource. Run over or shoot enemy pilots who've lost their vehicles in battle, and protect your own.

BATTLEZONE™

Take Strategy to the Front Lines.

Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. ©1997 Activision, Inc. Battlezone is a trademark of Atari/JTS Corporation. © 1980, 1997 Atari/JTS Corporation.
All rights reserved. Licensed by Activision. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

www.activision.com

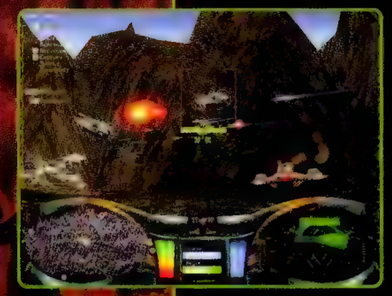
ACTIVISION®

In 1998,
Battlezone Puts You in Command of a War.

Actual Non-Hardware Accelerated Screenshot.

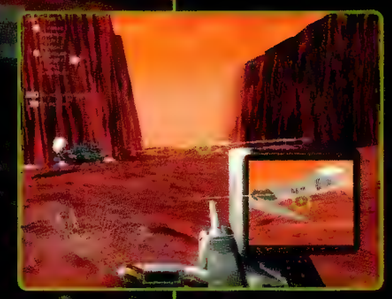
Battlezone takes real-time strategy to the front lines with truly revolutionary action-strategy.

You are the high-level Commander making decisions from your own war-ravaged tank. Lead your U.S. troops on a mission to gain control of a superior alien technology in the true "space race" against the Soviets...or cross enemy lines to the Soviet side. Only one super-power will survive the Battlezone... And it's all under your command.



Full-Scale 3-D Action
Pilot one of 20 anti-gravity war machines, and wield 25 devastating weapons — including mortars, mines, and the Thumper Device which triggers on-the-fly earthquakes on the morphable terrain.

Complete Strategic Control
Coordinate full-scale attacks with over 30 unique units, such as tanks, infantry and mobile assault turrets. Call in artillery, deploy wingmen and manage resources — all from within your tank.

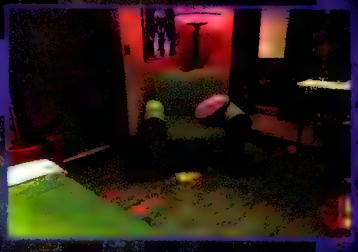


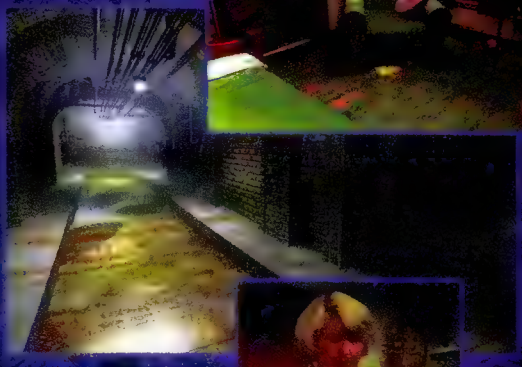
Dynamic First-Person Immersion
Lose your vehicle in battle, bail out, parachute to safety; then use your sniper rifle to take over another unit. Switch vehicles right on the battlefield of one of seven distinct moons or planets!

BATTLEZONE™

Take Strategy to the Front Lines.

Black
Dahlia





A baffling string of horrific serial murders. A shadowy brotherhood in pursuit of unimaginable power. An unholy ritual revived from the dark and distant past. This is *Black Dahlia*; America's most sensational unsolved murder case, now a haunting adventure of occult mystery.

- *From the creators of Ripper, a superb storyline inspired by actual events.*
- *A stunningly rendered, amazingly real 3-Dimensional game world that includes over 70 locations on two continents.*
- *More than 60 challenging and seamlessly integrated puzzles.*
- *A unique interface which immerses you in the ultimate adventure game experience.*
- *An outstanding cast of professional actors starring Dennis Hopper, Teri Garr and Darren Eliker.*

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE

www.bdahlia.com

©1997 Black Dahlia and the Take 2 logo are registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

A treadhead's dream-Vehicles and objects in Panzer Commander

German
Skoda
Pz III/F
Pz III/G
Pz III/H
Pz III/J
Pz IV/F2
Marder
Pz IV-G
Tiger
Panther/D
Pz IV-H
Panther/A
Panther/G
Pz IV/J
Tiger II
SdKfz 251/1
SdKfz 231
Opel Blitz
StuG-III
Jagdpanther
Hetzer
Mg Nest
Pak 40
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

Soviet
BT-5
IS-2
BT-7
KV-1a
T34/76A
T34/76B
KV-1c
T34/76/C
KV-1s
KV-85
T34/85
BA-6
GMC Truck
SU-85
SU-100
MG Nest
76.2mm AT Gun
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

U.S.
M4A3
M4A3E8
A4A3E2
Chaffee
Pershing
M16 Halftrack
GMC Truck
M2 Halftrack
M10
Greyhound
M18
M36
MG Nest
76 mm AT Gun
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

British
Mathilda II
Crusader I
Valentine IX
Churchill IV
Comet
Crom I
Crom III
Crom IV
Firefly
Crom VII
Bren Carrier
GMC Truck
Daimler
Achilles
MG Nest
17 Pdr
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

French
R-35
Char B
Hotchkiss
Opel Blitz
MG Next
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

Polish
Hotchkiss
Opel Blitz
MG Nest
Lt Infantry
Hvy Infantry

[1]Tanks, tank destroyers, half tracks and more – all will show up in the game [2] A view from the driver's station of a T-34; note the simplicity of the controls, something common in most WW II-era tanks [3] Some very fluid and intense battles took place in North Africa [4] Soviet T-34s – some would argue they were the best all-around tank of the war when led correctly

cern Martinez has is that gamers used to modern high-tech vehicles will look at these interiors and think that SSI has skimped on the gadgetry; he stressed, though, that these are accurate interiors – WW II tanks were much simpler than tanks of today.

The emphasis of the game is on bringing a platoon of tanks and their crews through the war. While scenarios will feature more than one unit, you will only directly control those tanks in your platoon; you're a platoon commander, not a company commander, so it'll be up to the fates of combat (and the scenario designer) to determine whether that platoon of tank destroyers will show up to help your assault or not. Martinez and the development team at Ultimation have been focusing on developing a thorough "threat assessment model" (which almost sounds like an AI knowledge base system) to govern the reactions of your tankers under a wide variety of situations. Tied into this is the commitment level of a unit; veteran units will have a higher commitment level, but this isn't always a good thing – order them to assault and they may keep at it until they've taken grievous losses, whereas a standard or green unit may pull back in time to save itself. Realistic unit actions are something SSI is striving for; says Martinez "The more you know about WW II tank combat – really know, not just surface know – the better this game will seem to you." He continues, "If you want *Doom* or you want invulnerable tank types, sorry, we're not going to deliver that – that's not what we're trying to do."

Since tanks, especially early in the war, often didn't have radios, it would be unrealistic to give you instantaneous communications with your subordinate vehicles. SSI will replicate these problems by simplifying the command sets available, and building in delays for tanks that are out of visual range (they may not even get your communications) or for those who don't have radios (they won't explicitly show the Soviet flag system, but the Soviet tanks will react more slowly to simulate it).

While you can jump into all the positions in your tank if you want to, SSI really means for you to assume the role of the tank commander. At higher skill levels, in fact, you may be blocked from other positions, or receive a lower score if you go in and fire every gun or drive every tank yourself.

After action report

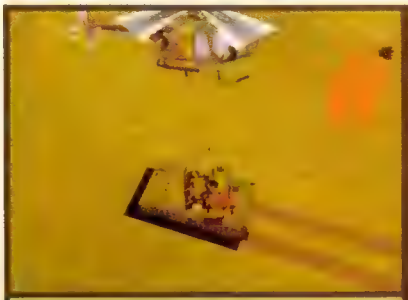
While campaigns and pre-built missions are all well and good, Martinez believes the included editor is almost "worth the price of admission." With it you can set up a battlefield (just about any European/North African terrain can be recreated), sculpt the terrain, put down appropriate vegetation and objects, select your units, and issue orders, objectives, and victory conditions.

You don't think they modeled a battle correctly? Change it! You think the Poles just didn't have it fair at the start of the war? Give them their own Tiger IIs to even things up (yes, you can mix and match unit types across national boundaries; maybe someone will build a *Kelley's Heroes* scenario). Martinez hasn't decided yet how to handle object limits; he's afraid that many users will try to build over the recommended object limits (not even a 300MHz Pentium II could model the whole battle of Kursk no matter how much you might want it) and then complain about the game's performance; to prevent this they may put in a top limit of the number of objects you can put in your scenarios, but Martinez would like to avoid this.

The team is still shooting for eight players via LAN or Internet, but this may drop to four or six. Play will usually consist of gamers on one side each commanding a tank in a platoon against either other human controlled platoons and/or AI units. A lot of this will depend on the design of the scenario; for example, three humans controlling one tank each, with a couple of AI-controlled support platoons, could go up against another human controlling a platoon all by himself. You probably won't have teams of platoons, especially for larger numbers of players, because this would likely go over the limit of objects the game engine can handle.

Martinez is planning on a baseline system of a 133MHz Pentium with 16MB of RAM. It is almost certain that the North American release will require a 3D card; with a release date of June '98, Martinez believes this won't be a problem for most simulation gamers, and even fears a backlash from 3D owners if they spend time on getting a non-3D accelerated engine working. 3D support is provided via DirectX; SSI will be testing the game with at least 30 different cards, and believes that DirectX is the only way to go if they want to support future hardware. A Mac version of the game is still "up in the air," but with the low numbers of Mac games currently being sold (Martinez called the numbers "scary"), don't hold your breath. They will be supporting the more popular programmable controllers from ThrustMaster, CH, and compatibles (with reprogrammability functions provided inside the game), but it's "probably too late" for force feedback support.

Assuming *Panzer Commander* is a success, Martinez envisions add-on packs with new campaigns, new driveable vehicles, or combinations of the two. The single game may even be the start of a series; Martinez says they may go a different route from the norm (which would be a modern game). He says "I could see us doing another WW II game before we do a modern game." Such plans, though, remain locked up in the vaults and minds of Martinez, SSI, and Ultimation; no matter what, it looks like they'll have a base to start from with *Panzer Commander*.



Work with support units like this Kiowa scout chopper

The IVIS modeled in Spearhead may be the closest to reality of any M1 game

Some of the vehicles in Spearhead; note the M88 recovery vehicle on the left – it can be used as a sort of "powerup" during the game to help repair damaged M1s

Spearhead - Can tons of tanks tango in Tunisia?

Zombie • Windows 95

Perhaps the farthest along in development of the five games in this article, Spearhead is surprisingly solid in beta. The development team (a combination of people from Zombie and MÄK Technologies, a company recognized in the military modeling & simulation community) has taken some interesting, and in some areas unconventional, approaches to tank simulation.

First, they're focusing *Spearhead* on one campaign, a battle in Tunisia against an invading Libyan force. Set a few years in the future, the backstory is written to explain why the Libyans are a much tougher opponent than they would be today. The campaign is in essence linear; the game's producer, John Williamson, is working on getting 50 missions into the campaign, but only if he can make them fully unique *and* realistic. Each mission will last approximately 10-15 minutes, although there will be some larger scenarios with multiple-engagements. He hopes to include 15 completely solo missions (versus any taken out of the campaign) and five to ten training missions in the box, and plans to post a scenario or so per week on their website after the game releases. A scenario designer may or may not be included with the game; if not, it should be released later in an add-on pack. The two dozen or so multiplayer missions will be a mix of cooperative and combative, with an emphasis on combative; of those, some will be deathmatch-style melees and some will be more advanced and realistic actions.

The "behind the scenes" modeling of the M1A2 itself may be the most advanced of any of the games we tried; where else, for example, can the driver turn off the tank's governor, put the tank into a special "pivot" mode, or set the parking brake? MÄK's Ryan Smith even says "it is possible to damage the tracks of the M1A2 accidentally by skidding." The crew stations are not modeled in the traditional cockpit style, but are instead shown as essentially full screen views. Williamson said they did this to help differentiate *Spearhead* from the rest of the crowd; while this may be controversial, this approach does give much better situational awareness than most other methods.

Outside the tank they'll be using whatever computing power you have to give strong visuals, including 3D card and AGP support; they're also already supporting force-feedback. Visually things look pretty good even in the beta: vehicles are detailed, they leave tracks that last for a long time (long enough that you won't see them disappear unless you're trying), and they can explode in a most spectacular manner (and their wrecks are wracked with smaller secondary explosions as their ammo cooks off).

One of MÄK's biggest contributions to the project is their background in military simulation technology. While you'll often hear the term SIMNET (SIMulation NETworking), that's really old hat, 80s-era tech; these days it's DIS (Distributed Interactive Simulation) and its follow-ons. DIS is a combination of a concept, a networking backbone, and a set of protocols that allow any simulator to hook with any other that uses the same protocols. MÄK has taken the complex and cumbersome DIS protocols and made what they call DIS Lite, a subset that's been "game optimized." The idea, obviously, is to shoot for the sim Holy Grail of a true "electronic battlefield." *Spearhead* is the first game that will have it, but others are planned; MÄK is even working on a dual version military/civilian amphibious assault "game" for the U.S. Marine Corps that could plug in with *Spearhead*, and there is obviously potential for more.

The downside to *Spearhead* right now is its uncertain publication date in the U.S.; the game's current publisher, BMG, has pulled out of the U.S. market and will only be releasing it in Europe, so Zombie is, as of late November, still looking for a U.S. publisher. For treadheads everywhere, here's hoping they find one.

The PERFECT Sequel To The PERFECT STRATEGY Game

3D terrain affects movement, line of sight, and combat results

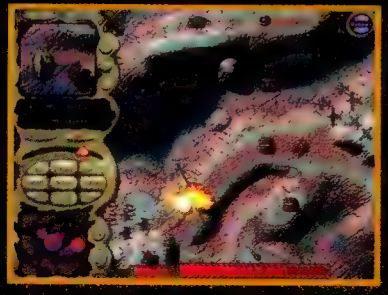
MAX 2:
COMPLETE
REAL-TIME
COMBAT

Exquisite 16-bit color

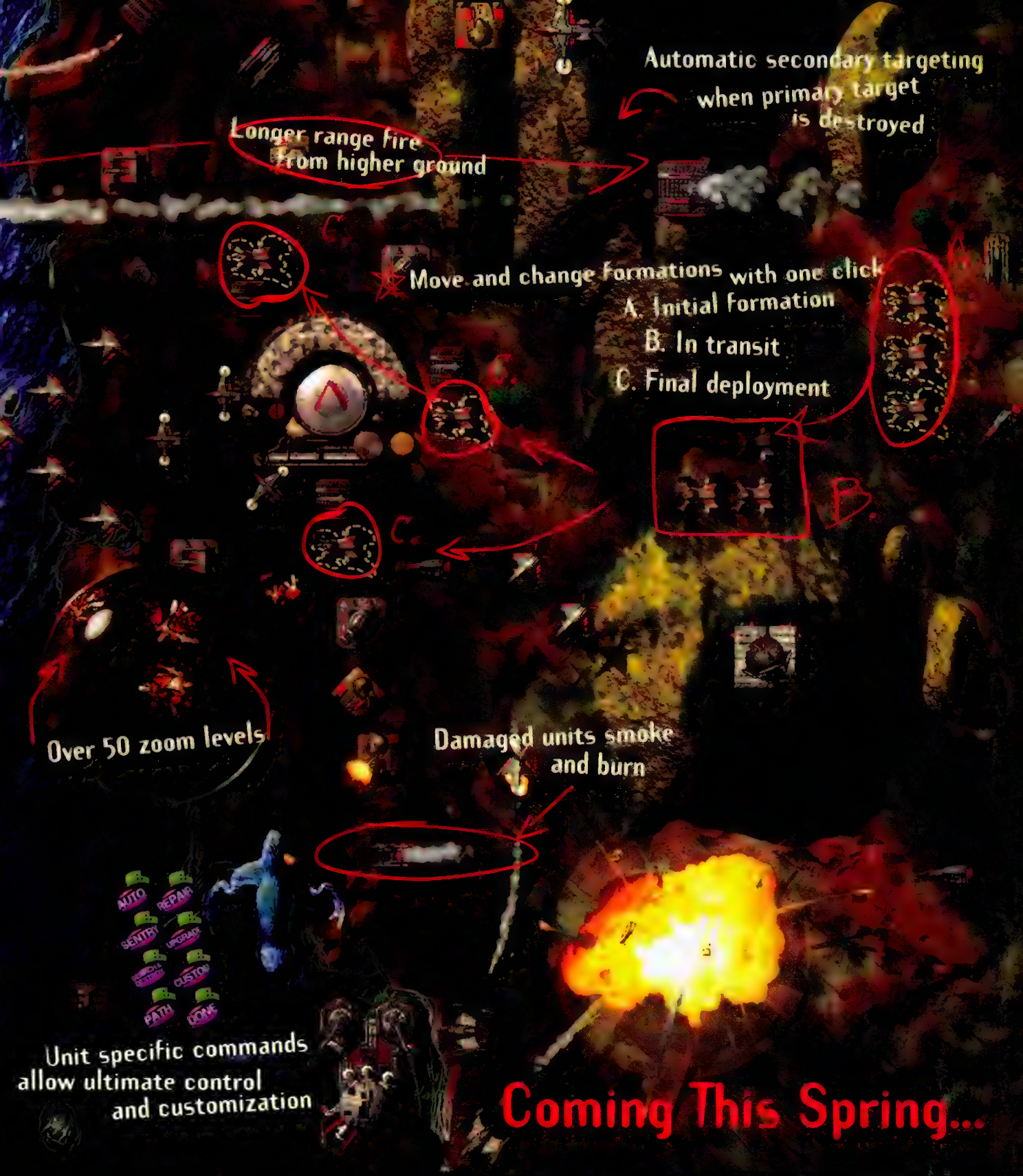
Alien units regenerate and improve with experience

Unlimited waypoint settings for sneak attacks

Unique parallax scrolling with 3D topography



- Optional Pause To Give Orders
- Complete Scenario Editor
- Multiplayer Capability (LAN, Modem, Internet) With Alliance Building
- Simultaneously view multiple areas of the map with the Spy Cam
- Optional Turn-Based Play



Coming This Spring...

MAX 2

MECHANIZED ASSAULT & EXPLORATION

Interplay

BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.

www.interplay.com

Questions? E-mail max2@interplay.com

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

© 1997 Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. MAX 2 Mechanized Assault & Exploration and Interplay are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. All other copyrights and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

© 1998 MicroProse, Inc. All rights reserved. Ultimate Race Pro is a trademark of

What are you willing to SACRIFICE for the ride of your life?

Available on Windows® 95. Visit your local retailer or call 1-800-695-GAME day or night (U.S. or Canada).

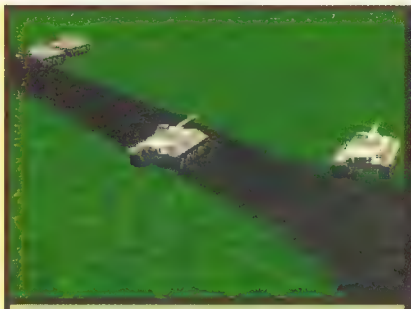
Jump into one of 16 tricked-out-megahorse-power-street-cars and lay down some significant rubber. You and up to 16 other uncivilized drivers now can race on dozens of random and twisting city streets, desert terrains and country tracks. Sure, the weather conditions change on you from thunderstorms to dense fog, but don't

let that ruin your Sunday afternoon drive. Because if you're feeling a little reckless, you can always enter the ultimate destruction arena and experience balls-to-the-wall action (see above). So, put your head between your legs and kiss your assorted auto parts goodbye, because *Ultimate Race Pro* is one hell of a raucous ride.

ULTIM@TE RACE PRO

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

DRIVE FAST. DRIVE DANGEROUS. DRIVE LIKE HELL THROUGH THE INTERNET.



A platoon of Panthers cautiously positioned

While dangerous to the commander during combat, the unbuttoned position gives the best view

The latest look of iPanzer '44. Notice how the thicker forest has scattered trees at its edges; vehicles can maneuver into and amongst these trees, creating either a great ambush situation or a deathtrap if they're caught there

iPanzer '44 - Clanking forward into the past

Interactive Magic • Windows 95

The second tank game from Interactive Magic, *iPanzer '44* takes off before the time of *iM1A2 Abrams*... way before, taking you all the way back to World War II and the Eastern and Western Fronts. Previewed in our December '97 issue (No. 85, pg. 76), little if anything has changed in the game's basic design; instead, I-Magic is well into beta and, depending on the publisher status of *Spearhead, iPanzer* may be the first tank game of the new year.

Aside from the WW II setting, the game adds two significant features to the engine created for *Abrams*: 3D support and multiple user-controllable tanks (the U.S. M4A3-76 HVSS "Sherman," the German PzKw Mk VG "Panther," and the Soviet T-34/85). Two campaigns on the East Front and one on the West Front, plus individual battle scenarios, should keep tankers busy.

Once *iPanzer* is finished, I-Magic will take the new 3D technology and upgrade *Abrams* with it. They also plan on an online version of *Abrams* to be hosted via their I-Magic Online service – a first for tank sim fans.

"Tank"- Something of a mystery

DID • Windows 95

The fifth and final game of our roundup is also the one we know the least about. DID, makers of the highly acclaimed flight sim *EF 2000*, has been keeping very quiet about their tank game project, preferring instead to first focus attention – and coverage – on their next flight sim, *F-22 Air Dominance Fighter*. Based on what they have said and shown combined with their history in flight sims, however, should be more than enough for tank sim fans to want to keep a close eye on what will probably be the last of these games released.

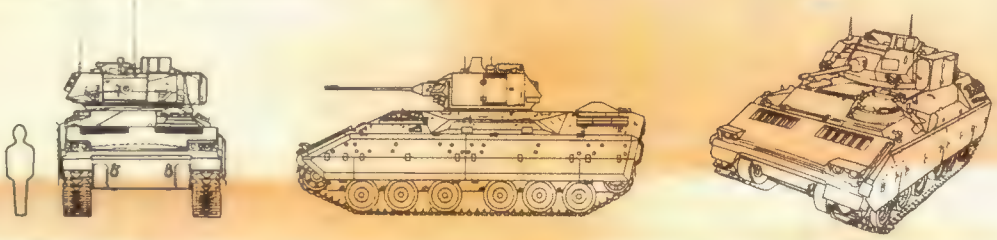
If you go to DID's web site (www.did.com) you can find information on what they term their *Ground Warfare Technology Demonstrator*. Initially a testbed for examining entry into the military simulation community, this prototype showed that they certainly had something applicable

Dust, haze, even vegetation—all elements important in recreating the feel of ground combat

Buildings like HEAT rounds at close range about as much as tankers do

An Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) can still give a tank grief, especially if the tank doesn't see it

to gaming as well. At the '97 Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta they showed the very first prototype of their game, known for now only as *Tank*; just two months into development, they already had a functioning virtual world. They are considering giving gamers three modern tanks: the British Challenger, the U.S. Abrams, and the German Leopard, although the final game may only have one or two. For the game they plan to focus on smaller, more detailed environments than they've done before, something that would be appropriate for a ground warfare simulation. Thinking even further ahead to the second generation product, they'd like to link in with their air simulators, creating what they call the "Electronic Battlefield of Tomorrow." □

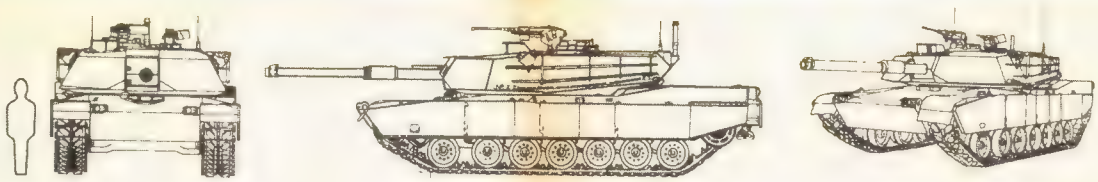


Rack 'n' stack: a summary of the five games as they stand now

Note that this information is all based on the beta (or even earlier) builds and may well change by the time the games are released

Game	M1 Tank Platoon II	Panzer Commander	Spearhead	iPanzer '44	"Tank"	iM1A2 Abrams *	Armored Fist 2 *
Company	MicroProse	SSI	Zombie	I-Magic	DID	I-Magic	NovaLogic
Setting	Modern	WW II	Modern	WW II	Modern	Modern	Modern
Driveable Vehicles	1	>24 (6-8 per country)	1	3 (one per country)	1-3	1	1
Campaigns	5	6	1	3-6	**	3	4 (sort of)
Campaign Type	Dynamic	Linked missions	Linear	Dynamic	**	Dynamic	Mission groups
Scenario Editor	No	Yes	Maybe	No	**	No	No
3D support	Probable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

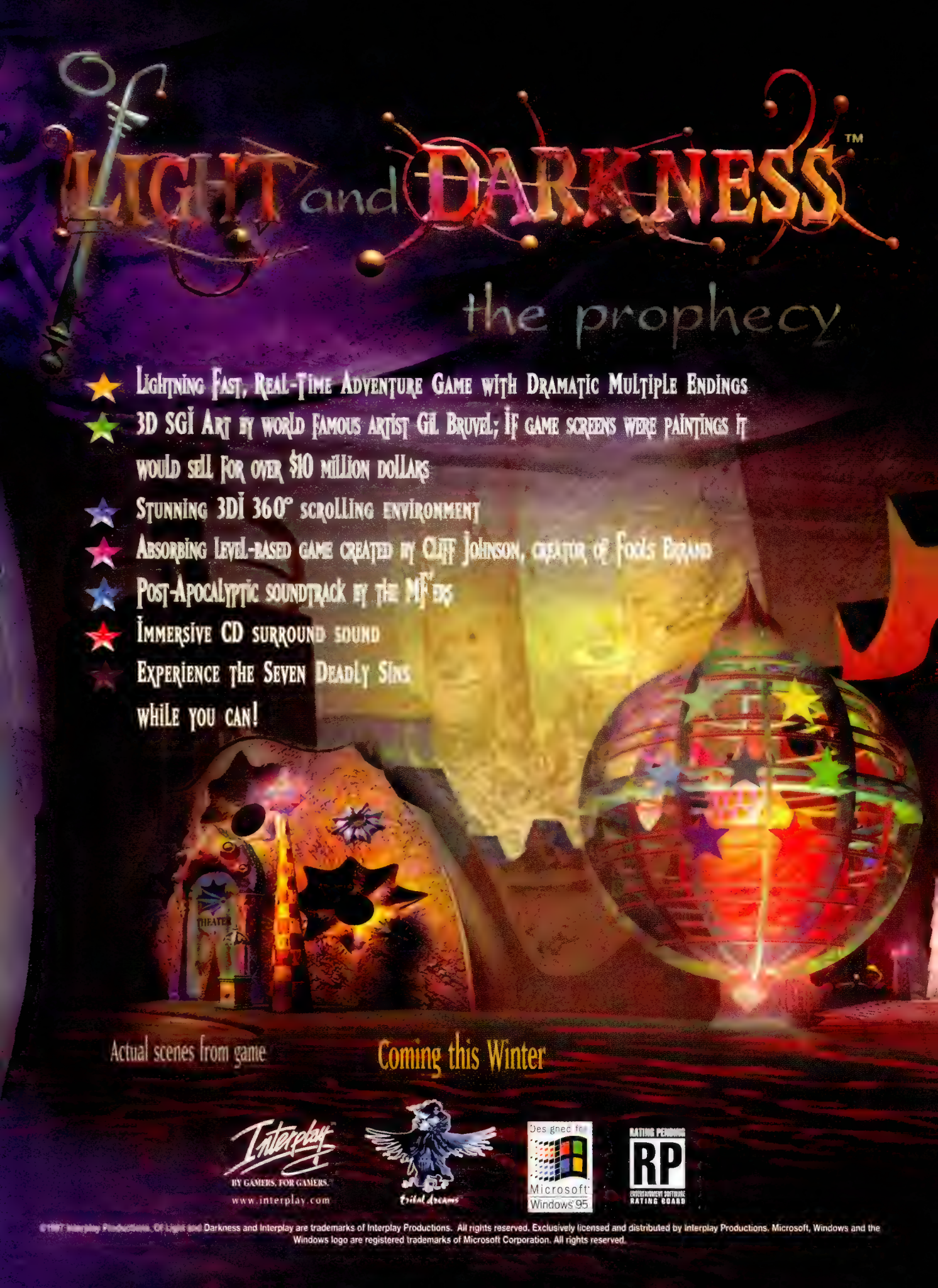
* *iM1A2 Abrams* and *Armored Fist 2* were released in '97; they are included for comparison purposes
** Information not available at this time



There are 7 deadly sins
in the world...

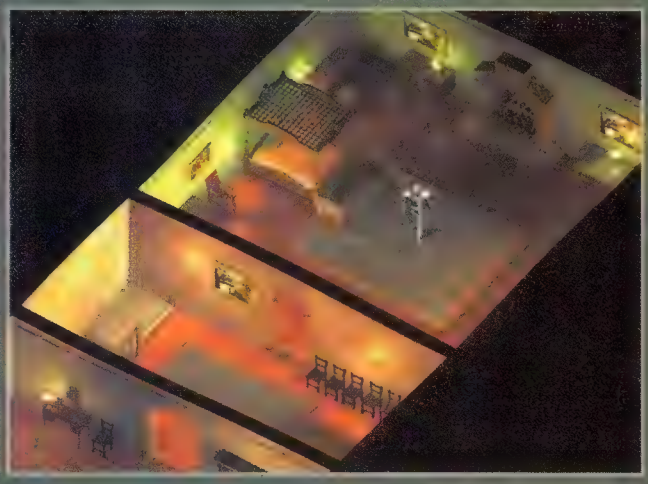
...you are committing
one of them
right now.
of
LIGHT
and
DARKNESS

SINNERS BEWARE, THE PURIFICATION IS NEAR ...

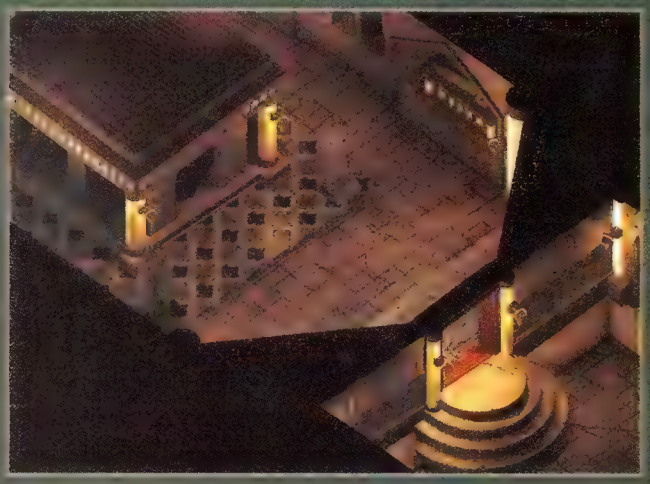

LIGHT and DARKNESS™
the prophecy
Lightning Fast, Real-Time Adventure Game with Dramatic Multiple Endings
3D SGI Art by world famous artist Gil Bruvel; if game screens were paintings it would sell for over $10 million dollars
Stunning 3DI 360° scrolling environment
Absorbing Level-based game created by Cliff Johnson, creator of Focus Enzand
Post-Apocalyptic soundtrack by the MF EDS
Immersive CD surround sound
Experience the Seven Deadly Sins while you can!
THEATER
Actual scenes from game
Coming this Winter
Interplay
BY GAMERS, FOR GAMERS.
www.interplay.com
Tribal Dreams
Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
RATING PENDING
RP
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

©1997 Interplay Productions. Of Light and Darkness and Interplay are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. Exclusively licensed and distributed by Interplay Productions. Microsoft, Windows and the Windows logo are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

The top-down isometric view is very reminiscent of Diablo



Sweeping views of more than one location allow a broader perspective



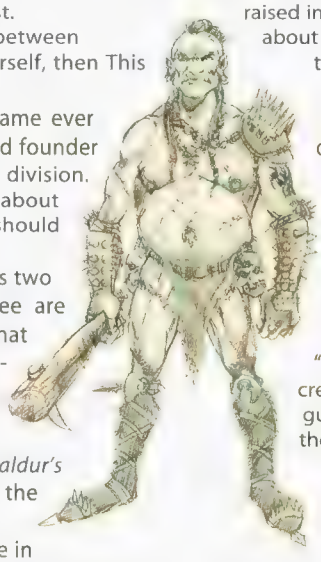
BALDUR'S GATE

FINDING A REMEDY FOR IRON-POOR BLOOD

Pool of Radiance, *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, *Secret of the Silver Blades* and *Pools of Darkness* - if you go back that far in the history of TSR-licensed *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* products, you probably have a pair of dice and a Dungeon Master or two under your belt. Perhaps you whip them out on occasion and still undertake *AD&D* as a table game. You are a purist.

You know your *AD&D*. You know the difference between a gibberling and a kobald. If you recognize yourself, then This Bud's For You.

"This game is going to be the best *AD&D* game ever made for the PC," says Ray Muzyka, designer and founder of Bioware and head of their *Forgotten Realms* division. Muzyka has what may prove to be a lot to crow about in *Baldur's Gate*, a wildly anticipated RPG that should whoosh onto shelves by second quarter 1998.



Bioware was founded 1995 by Muzyka and his two partners, Greg Zeschuk and Aug Yip. All three are licensed physicians, but so addicted to games that they choose to lay down their stethoscopes during a good deal of their time and devote it to making games the way *they* would like to see them done. The rest of the time they perform organ transplants on Druids and Clerics. With *Baldur's Gate* on the way, it's only a matter of time before the good doctors stop making house calls.

Shipping on five CDs, *Baldur's Gate* takes place in the (not so) *Forgotten Realms*, where many of TSR's *AD&D* scenarios are set. The Sword Coast stretches from north to south along the main continent, and along it lie Amn, the Wood of Sharp Teeth, and Baldur's Gate, the largest city in the region. One of the area's greatest resources, its iron, begins to dwindle. Roving bands of renegades are stealing and hoarding it, and existing supplies of ore are tainted. Weapon supplies are threatened. Farming and crafting are suffering. Hence, the very existence of the denizens of Baldur's Gate is in danger. This iron crisis may be precursor to a greater evil, and instead of relying on Geritol, the Realms are relying on *you* to settle the unrest.

WHAT A CHARACTER

You begin with one character who can be generated using any of the races, classes, and alignments *AD&D* has to offer. Be a dwarf, elf, human, or halfing and choose among fighter, bard, thief, cleric, druid, mage, ranger, paladin, plus a number of multi-class others (keeping in mind that not all races may become all classes). You are an orphan; raised in the monk fortress of CandleKeep, you have a lot to learn about your heritage and destiny. Twenty-four possible additions to your party exist throughout the land, and you may invite them to join you when you meet them.

These NPCs will have their own AI scripting, which determines their general behavior in basic situations. Scripts will be modifiable to some extent, so that the player can customize personalities and behaviors. You may shout, "No way!" (being burned out from micromanaging real-time strategy resource collectors), and that's OK, because the built-in scripts should be perfectly acceptable. Or you can choose broad attributes with which to customize, such as "aggressive," "cautious," "agoraphobic." Finally, you may choose to go the gamut, creating specific reactions: "If enemy is Kissing Bandit, strum guitar three times the level of your charisma, hit him over the head and shout, 'El Kabong!'"

IT'S REAL-TIME? STOP THE CLOCK!

In addition to the versatility inherent in character customization, the entire storyline is being approached dynamically. Says Muzyka, "Unlike a lot of other RPGs, we think that the solutions here should be variable depending on your approach to the world – you can be aggressive and attack anything you see (it won't work too well considering you're only a first level character to start with!) or try and learn more through subtlety and stealth, or through charisma and personality. We're working hard to ensure that the story is the best it can be (my head programmer has read every one of the *Forgotten Realms* novels) and that the gameplay is both easy and fun to use, plus true to the spirit and ruleset of TSR's *AD&D* system (my head designer is an ex-RPG store owner and full-time Dungeon Master who has the source books for *AD&D* memorized pretty much cold…)."

What *AD&D* purists may have a difficult time coming to grips with is the game's real-time engine. Certainly classic tabletop role-playing has always been turn-based. In order to compensate, they are using a "modified round" system in which each character is always on his or her own singular round, so that the rule set will still apply. There will be a pause command for those traumatic urges for planning time, and, of course, if you slow the game down to a snail's pace, you might be able to fool yourself into believing it to actually be turn-based.

HOW MANY STARS FOR AMBIANCE?

The view is reminiscent of *Diablo*'s isometric perspective with some pretty impressive 3D graphics. There are over 10,000 scrolling 640X480 game screens, complete with real-time lighting and dynamic weather. All maps will be 3D as well, giving the game a realistic topography. A medieval style will dominate the interiors and cities, while epoch-less forests and caverns are in harmony with nature. As in *Diablo*, your characters' appearance will change as they upgrade their armor and weapons.

The story will span seven chapters, but within each chapter gameplay will be as non-linear as possible. Choices of where you go, or who you want to interact with will be open-ended most of the time. Of course there will be specific goals to achieve in order to progress to the next chapter, but there will also be many subquests to add to the immersive ambiance, and paths toward the intermittent goals will be varied and branching in different directions. Most of the subquests are said to present a moral or ethical dilemma… hmmm… "Kill the sacred cow or let the population starve?" How you handle each situation will effect your reputation, and people in the land will react to you accordingly (unless they've starved).

Baldur's Gate is the first of a trilogy. It will allow your character to progress from levels one through six, the next installment will take you from levels seven through twelve and the last from levels thirteen through eighteen, so only in the last episode will you be able to use the spells and weapons of the truly elite. Add-on packs will be available as well.

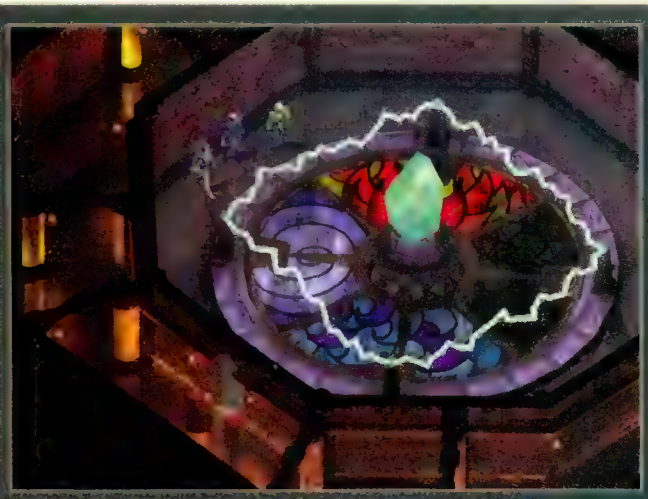
MULTIPLAYER GAME VERSUS MULTIPLAYER WORLD

Although the developers wish to someday create a "*Baldur's Gate Online*" type of game, the current plan is to allow up to six players join hands in completing the same quests as in single player mode. (Perhaps stories of *Ultima Online*'s experiences have scared them off.)

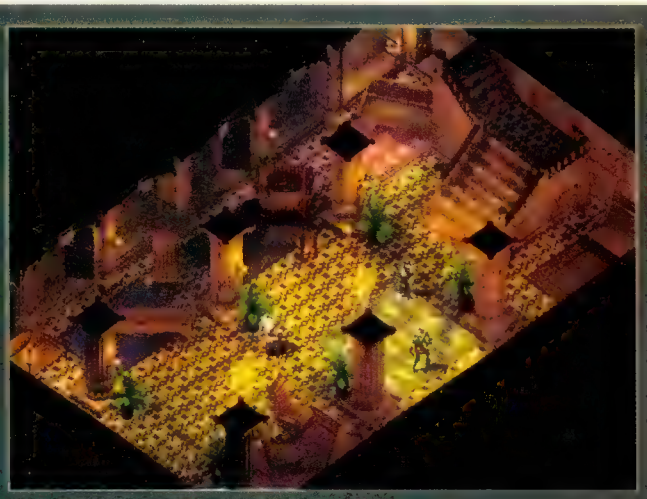
Each player must have a full copy of the game, and may connect via LAN or the Internet. Direct connect issues are still in question at this writing. Players will be able to control more than one character and may trade (or sell or gamble away) control to others at any time. Characters that have not been taken into control will be handled by the AI. Will people end up turning all of this carefully crafted interactive story business into a deathmatch? Since they *can*, we can probably bet on it.

…IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE GOOD DOCTORS STOP MAKING HOUSE CALLS.

All role-playing gamers who were dissatisfied with *Diablo*'s RPG elements will want to take a very close look at this title. It pushes pizzazz, but seems to remain dead-on true to classic RPG. The doctors would have it no other way. –*Cindy Yans*

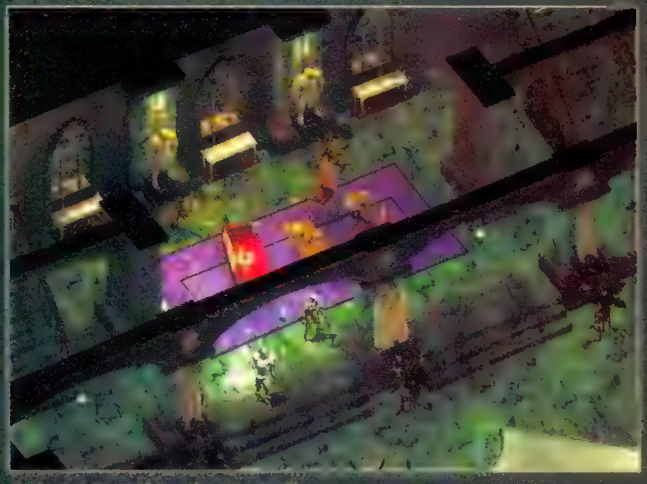


Magical effects surround the stained glass crystal-holder



Non-tiled map enables more fluid movement

Some of these sofas appear post-modern



Twin statues adorn the rear wall

How Fast Is The New WIREPLAY GAMING NETWORK?
How Fast Can You Play?
WIREPLAY.
The ULTIMATE REAL-TIME online GAMING network.
*FREE for a limited time to MCI Internet® customers.
*HAUL MODEM over to www.wireplay.mci.com
or CALL 1-888-4WIREPLAY.
MCI
*The thrill of INSTANT VICTORY
without the agony of DELAYED DEFEAT.
WARNING: WIREPLAY is a high-speed gaming network. Play at your own risk.
Wireplay
The games network
® 1997, MCI TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
WIREPLAY is a trademark of British Telecommunications, plc, and is used with permission.

Over the Net

Professional Quaking for dollars

How many of you remember that old *Far Side* strip which showed proud parents watching their chubby child playing video games in front of the TV? It showed the parents imagining future newspaper ads recruiting professional gamers for a variety of high-paying jobs. I remember it well, since it used to adorn the door to the testing area back at SSI; it was particularly funny (at least to us, then) since nobody, not even the testers already *doing* it, could imagine creating a life-long career out of game playing. Guess what? That strip just got a whole lot less funny.

In October TEN and AMD co-announced the creation of the world's first Professional Gaming League, or the PGL for short. The concept is simple—take the basic idea of other professional gaming leagues such as the NBA or NFL and apply it to online gaming. Gamers compete against each other in tournaments, battle their way up the ladder, and eventually someone comes out on top and wins big prizes.

That's all fine and dandy, but what makes this particularly interesting is the *scale* of the league. TEN and AMD are serious about this, and they intend to create *the* premiere place in the world to prove one's gaming skills. How serious? With over 1.5 million dollars in sponsorships and $250,000 in cash prizes for the first year, we're talking about quit-your-job-and-play-games-professionally serious. Don't just watch the cash, though—with sponsors such as AMD, 3COM/U.S. Robotics, Logitech, and Rendition you can expect some pretty serious (read: low-cheese factor) hardware prizes including high-end processors, modems, mice/controllers, and 3D accelerators.

The PGL launched on November 3 with two games: *Quake* and *Command & Conquer*. During the first month of the PGL, players must log a minimum number of hours on those titles in order to qualify for the tournament. Beyond that, qualification matches will be used to identify the top 128 players for each game; those same matches will also be used to determine each player's seeding for official league play, which will take the form of a two-month long single-elimination tournament. To make things more interesting, the final rounds of each season will be held live at major sports and entertainment venues, and there have even been rumors of live MTV broadcasts of the finals. Could it be that online gaming is actually becoming credible with the populace at large?

In order to play, players must register at the PGL website (www.pgl.net)—obviously, TEN members are already eligible to play; however, it's not necessary to become a TEN member to compete. All non-TEN members can register for the individual tourneys (approximately a three month period) for $9.95. That "tourney-membership" only allows you access to the portions of TEN hosting the PGL; if you want access to the rest of the service, you may wish to consider the full membership.

Command & Conquer: Red Alert ▲

▼ Quake II

Interestingly enough, these registration requirements may shift in the future. It's still looking as though TEN is on the move to their own free-play model. Recent announcements of TEN's hosting free games such as *Total Annihilation* and *Magic the Gathering* seem to point to testing the free-play capabilities of the service in preparation for something larger. Don't be surprised to see TEN make the jump soon to some sort of free service, supported by advertising and premium area fees. However, I'd be surprised if the PGL was among the "titles" in the free-play area; more likely it'll be considered premium content and charged for, along with the recently-launched *NASCAR Racing Online*. The bright side to that coin is that the majority of the fees collected are likely to go back into the tournament in the form of bigger and greater prizes, both cash and otherwise.

So where's the dark side? There really isn't one. Although you do have to pay to compete, it seems only fair—most large tournaments has some sort of registration fee to pay, and $9.95 (for non-TEN members) seems reasonable for three months of play. The only issue I can see is if a competing company such as Mplayer or HEAT tries to come out with their own version of the PGL. If they do a decent job, it might fragment the playing groups and eliminate the whole point of having a single league for everyone to compete in. However, I don't see that as being too likely; although those services have had their own tournaments in the past, and have also discussed doing a PGL-like league, it looks as though TEN has pretty much sucked the wind out of their sails with this announcement. It'll also be difficult to get people to move to another league, unless these other companies can somehow top the cash and prize sponsorships TEN's already arranged.

So what more can you ask for? Here's your chance to get out there and prove to all your friends that those countless hours spent playing games wasn't a waste of your life . . . and you *know* it'll annoy the heck out of them when you buy your next house with your winnings. *–André Vrignaud*

André Vrignaud has worked in the computer gaming industry since 1990, although he admits the Atari 2600 had a great influence on his formative years well before then. Most recently he's worked at SSI and TEN, and is currently working for Intel in their New Media Programs group. He is always interested in stimulating, albeit inflammable, email (including rumors, tips, and other random trivia) and can be reached at **overthenet@cdmag.com.**

AIR WARRIOR® II | ALIENS™ ONLINE | MULTIPLAYER BATTLETECH® | LEGENDS OF KESMAI™ | ONLINE CASINO™

JACK NICKLAUS® ONLINE GOLF TOUR | CLASSIC CARDS™ | STARSHIP TROOPERS™ ONLINE | HARPOON™ ONLINE | CATCHWORD™

Aliens is a trademark of Fox Inc. and used under license. CatchWord is a trademark of Discovery Communications, Inc. and used under license. BattleTech is a registered trademark of FASA Corporation and used under license. Harpoon Online is a trademark of Larry Bond and Chris Carlson and used under license. Online Casino and Classic Cards are trademarks of Masque Publishing and used under license. Starship Troopers is a trademark of Columbia Tri-star Inc. and used under license. Jack Nicklaus is a registered trademark of Golden Bear International used under license to Accolade Inc. Air Warrior, GameStorm and Legends of Kesmai are trademarks of Kesmai Corporation. © 1997 Kesmai Corporation. All rights reserved.

Forget the box.
Forget limits.
Forget small.
Brace yourself for the future of games.
Massive. Random. Forever changing.
Populated by thousands.
Real people. Real battles. Real adventures.
This is the great unknown.
This is GameStorm.
Everything else is just practice.
$9.95 a month—all games
unlimited play
first month free
www.gamestorm.com
GAMESTORM™

Tom Clancy's Politika

Red flags go a-flying in this strategic thriller

Appropriately enough, red flags start flying early in *Politika*, a game about unrest in the political morass of contemporary Russia. But these red flags don't have a hammer and sickle on them. The first sign of trouble comes with the installation, which feels like an interrogation in a Soviet gulag: you will be asked if you want to install a half-dozen or so different proprietary Microsoft programs. Ominously, the game's icon isn't a trench coat-clad KGB agent or a picture of Boris Yeltsin's vodka-soaked noggin. It is instead something far more dangerous and representative of the backwards institutions that hinder modern-day life: it is a Java icon. It's not clear whether *Politika's* confession that it is "the first major Java-based game" is an apology or a warning.

Politika has been slavishly hard-coded to a 640x480 area in the center of the screen, completely wasting any real estate gained by higher resolutions. While at first you might not mind the limited size, your tolerance will soon fade when you see the cramped layout. A map of Russia is crammed into the gameplay area with various tokens scattered across it. If this were the only display, *Politika* would be in fine shape. However, you'll need to leave a chat window open to follow the game, which requires obscuring a significant part of the map. To make matters worse, there are many times during the game that you'll want two chat windows open, since a separate window is required for private chats or eavesdropping on the conversations of others. Further evidence of poor design can be seen in the game's long load time, pinched fonts, and erratic windows (some can be moved and resized, some can't).

The designers have made it clear that they wanted to duplicate the feel of a board game around which players talk to each other, so they've made chatting an integral part of the game. But in addition to the chat window fiasco, they've made interaction difficult by imposing a mandatory time limit on turns. The game clock is ticking no matter what; even if your opponents have the patience of Job and they want an extended and casual game, there's no way to disable this annoying "hurry up and take your move" feature (which, oddly enough, is even present in games against the computer). It's not easy to interact under that kind of pressure, especially when it comes to the sorts of elaborate deals that are made during board games.

Round 1 Communist Place Representative 0:00
$80,000
Pravda Church places representative at Khakassia
Pravda Communist places representative at Ural
Pravda Reformer places representative at Tomsk
Pravda Reformer places representative at Volga

[top to bottom] From this zoomed-in view, you can see the little animations associated with each piece; unfortunately, since the game's unplayable this close in, they're all but wasted

Visible dice rolls are used to decided token battles

Red Storm's web site makes it pretty convenient to schedule and participate in multiplayer games, but their server is the only way to play against other humans. And since the CD has to be in the drive to run the game, they've effectively decreed that each and every player must buy the game at full price to participate. Games can be played against a formidable AI, but alliances, which are a major part of the human-to-human games, can't be coordinated with computer players.

But the biggest tragedy of *Politika* is the fact that there is a fantastic game hidden under all this mess. Each player takes control of one of Russia's power factions with its special ability. Factions compete for control of the onboard tokens representing political power throughout Russia. Tokens battle it out with dice and cards, both of which can be purchased with money gathered from randomly chosen territories each turn. Uprisings can be used to block income in certain territories and representatives can be shuffled around to influence token takeovers. If it sounds simple, that's because it is; but it's the sort of delicious simplicity that leaves plenty of room for the uncertainty of the human element.

The different factions and their abilities are very cleverly designed and meticulously balanced. Although the gameplay is heavily abstracted, it paints a realistic and lively drama as the game progresses. Imagine the KGB using an uprising of students to shut down the Reformers and Nationalists in Moscow while taking advantage of visiting Western diplomats to gain influence in Kamchatka, where newly thawed relations with Japan have opened financial opportunities. These are the sorts of vivid scenarios that play out turn by turn in a typical game of *Politika*.

The cards are perfectly integrated into the game, adding a welcome degree of uncertainty and intrigue to the sleek game system. Trading of money, cards, and tokens opens all sorts of interesting, albeit hurried, diplomatic options. In fact, *Politika* is so well designed as a game engine that I'd consider buying the board game. But an even stronger testament to the quality of the game is that it's still worth playing despite its interface fiasco; and with an interface this backwards, that's a heavy vote of confidence. *–Tom Chick*

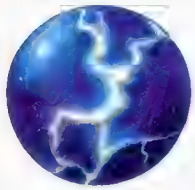
★★★☆☆

Politika

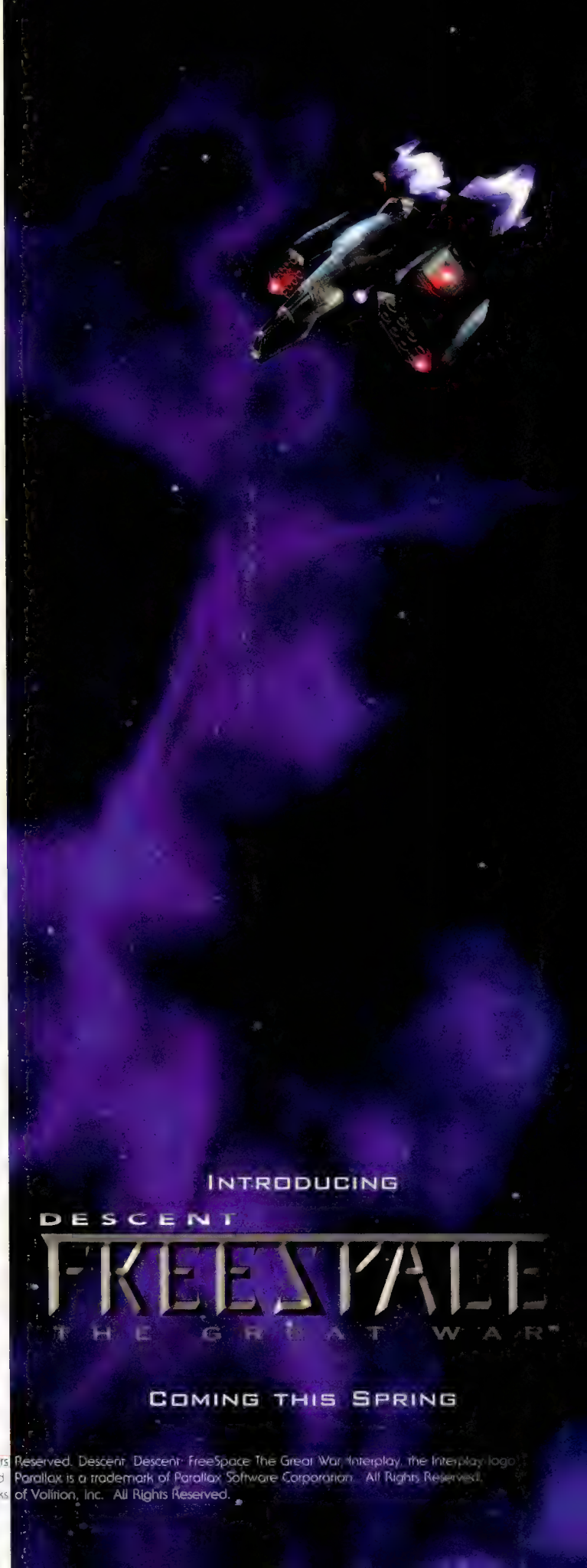
Red Storm Entertainment • ww.redstorm.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 100MHz Pentium or higher • Multiplayer: 3-8 players, Internet

THE CREATORS OF

DESCENT™



TAKE YOU OUT OF THE TUNNELS AND INTO THE VAST WONDERS OF SPACE.



INTRODUCING

DESCENT

FREESPACE

THE GREAT WAR™

COMING THIS SPRING

BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

WWW.INTERPLAY.COM

Parallax Software

DESCENT FREESPACE THE GREAT WAR ©1998 Parallax Software Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Descent, Descent: FreeSpace The Great War, Interplay, the Interplay logo and By Gamers For Gamers are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All Rights Reserved. Parallax is a trademark of Parallax Software Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Volition and the Volition logo are trademarks of Volition, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

TAKE THE GALAXY BY FORCE.

Conquer the galaxy through military action, diplomacy or covert operations. With *Star Wars Rebellion*, those are just a few of the ways to implement strategy and tactics on a grand scale – with control of the *Star Wars* galaxy as the prize. Command the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire. Engage in spectacular battles. Earn the loyalty (or resentment) of some 200 planets. Play in real-time, in single play mode or two player mode over a network, the Internet or direct connect. Is the Force with you? Discover for yourself.

STAR WARS
REBELLION
TO CONTROL A WORLD·TO COMMAND A GALAXY
ZONE
play it on zone.com
for 2 players only
LUCAS ARTS
For Windows 95 CD-ROM
www.lucasarts.com
KIDS TO ADULTS
ESRB
© TM & © 1997 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. Used under authorization.

SOLDIERS AT WAR™

Ambushes. Barrages. Conflagrations. It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This!

SOLDIERS AT WAR™ is turn-based, squad-level combat with all the heroism and drama of a good World War II movie! Lead a squad of 8 men through a hair-raising campaign of 15 linked scenarios. Experience D-Day and the assault on Monte Cassino. Execute commando raids and fight fierce house-to-house battles in blasted cities like Anzio and Dresden. An extremely flexible mission editor and 15 extra stand-alone missions, many from the German perspective, make the action virtually endless. Four-player multiplay via network or the internet lets you fight it out with real opponents!

To Order: Visit your retailer or call 1-800-234-3088 (USA & Canada) with Visa or MasterCard.

www.ssionline.com

WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM

SSI

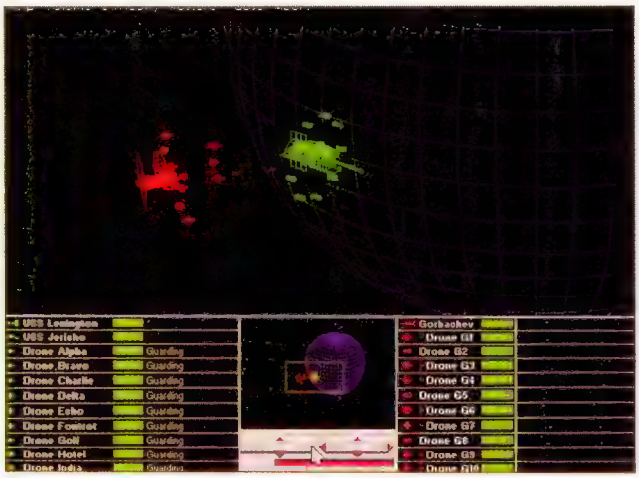
A MINDSCAPE® COMPANY

RP

©1997 Strategic Simulations, Inc., a Mindscape Company. All rights reserved. SOLDIERS AT WAR is a trademark of Strategic Simulations, Inc. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective holders. Call 1-800-771-3772 for Game Rating Information.

Command Post

A glimmer grows into reality?



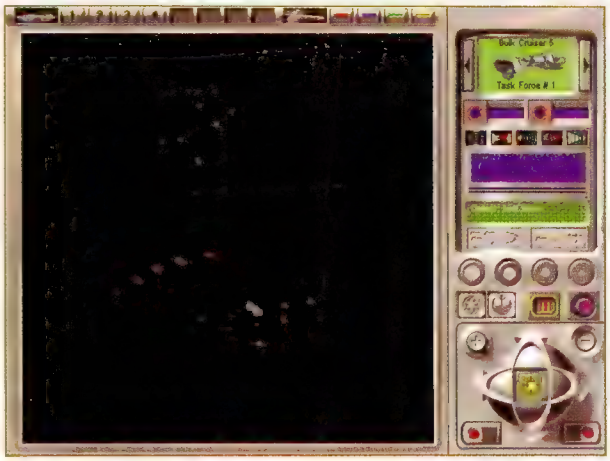
[top to bottom]

The strategy game buried in Legend's adventure, Mission Critical – lots of fun in its own right, it gave a glimmer of what tactical space strategy games could be

Rebellion's tactical space battles; set up the battle from far out...

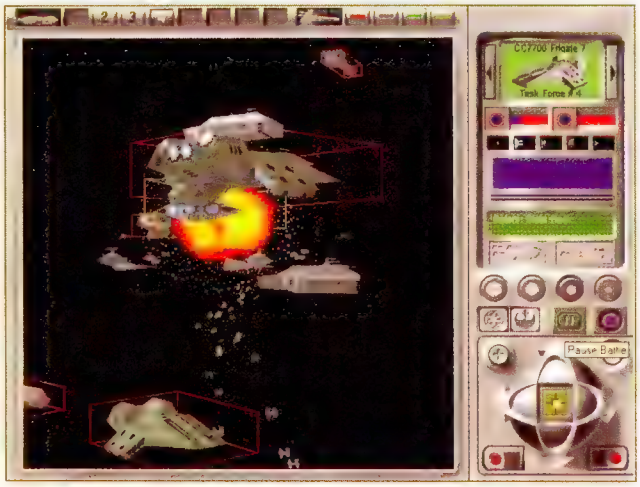
...or zoom in to view the action up close

Way back in the September '96 *Command Post* [*CGS+ 70*, pg. 72], I pointed to the tactical space strategy sub-game built into Legend's adventure *Mission Critical* as something that really represented what I'd like to see in a future title. It wasn't flashy (it just used wireframe graphics), but was clean, well-designed, and actually "felt" more like a game of space warfare than almost any other space strategy game I've tried. Why? Largely because it represented space in three dimensions instead of the flat plane almost every other past game has used... well, sort of. You see, it actually took place in orbit around a planet. While you could send your combat craft around the planet, you couldn't change orbits, so it was really more of a 2D game wrapped around a 3D sphere. Still, it was a glimmer of what was possible for tactical space strategy games; like I said then, "imagine major fleet actions in quasi-3D space!"



And there sat my "dream game" idea (well, one of them), just a glimmer. There was a *MOO*-like game that had real time 3D tactical battles (I believe it was called *Galactic Conquest*), but it didn't look too promising and the game has been canceled anyway. I tried to convince Legend to turn the sub-game into a fully fleshed out game of its own, but for some reason my cry of "Because I'd really like it!" wasn't enough for them to start development. It looked like my dream would have to stay in the glimmer stage... at least, it looked that way until LucasArts dropped by to show us the latest build of *Rebellion*, their upcoming strategy game set in the *Star Wars* universe.

First, some quick background: *Rebellion* starts just after the destruction of the first Death Star. You control either the Rebel Alliance trying to free the galaxy or the Empire trying to bring it fully under your dominion. While many will compare the strategic mode to *MOO*, this is a bit inaccurate: instead of spanning decades or centuries, the game plays out over months and years. Initially we though that, at the strategic level, the game would be turn-based, but it turns out it's real-time. You can adjust speed to a crawl; hopefully this will be slow enough because there's apparently no option to enter orders while paused.



But the strategic level of the game isn't what interests us, it's the tactical mode. There are no *Command & Conquer*-style ground battles, with AT-AT rushes or any such stuff; instead, the tactical battles are all fought in space... 3D space! Could this be the dream game I've been hoping for? Well, it's much too early to say for sure, but what LucasArts showed us is promising indeed. While the tactical mode is real time too, you can pause the game (at least in single-player) to ponder your moves and to enter orders to your ships. "Space" is a cube, perhaps with a planet nearby, into which one fleet warps, only to encounter whatever force awaits (woe unto the single Y-Wing fighter defending a system when a multi-Star Destroyer fleet arrives). Each battle starts paused, so you'll have time to set up your initial moves before the battle is joined. Zoom out to see the big battle wagons or zoom in to see the swarms of fighters. Rotate to get a better perspective, decide who will defend, who will attack, who will intercept, etc.

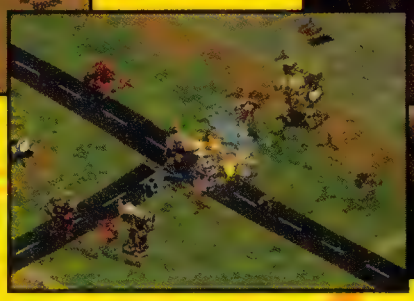
The big problem with 3D space battles is how to issue orders to units via a 2D computer monitor. Rebellion solves this problem by providing you with a number of preset waypoints; turn them on, and simply click on one to order a ship or group to that point. Different densities of these waypoints can be displayed, so it's unlikely you won't be able to send your units where you want.

Battles can be small – a fighter dogfight (although since TIE fighters don't have warp capability, there's probably something big out there somewhere) – to major fleets of Rebel Mon Calamari cruisers, Corellian corvettes, fighter wings, and more going up against swarms of TIE craft (fighters, interceptors, bombers, etc), Star Destroyers, Super Star Destroyers, and maybe even another Death Star.

Currently this tactical mode is only available as a subset of the strategic game, but hopefully LucasArts will implement a "skirmish" mode that lets you fight just the tactical battles. This could well be the game that turns my glimmer into reality; one way or the other, we should find out soon, as the game is due to be out about the time you'll be reading this. *–Scott Udell*

BATTLETECH UNIVERSE

You will have a plan. You will be rash. You will love your troops. You will curse their names. You



You will face your fear. You will respect your enemy. You will act on instinct. You will pay the

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

© 1997 FASA Corporation. Published by MicroProse. MicroProse is a registered trademark of MicroProse, Inc. or its affiliated companies. BattleTech and MechWarrior are Registered Trademarks and MechCommander is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Used Under License. The FASA Interactive logo design is a Trademark of FASA Interactive, Inc.

will be wrong.
will panic
You will attempt the impossible
You will pull it off
MECH COMMANDER™
THE FIRST MECHWARRIOR® GAME OF TACTICAL COMMAND
You will be defeated.
You will be exalted.
price.
You will ask for a second chance.
You will know what it is to command.

Coming Soon for PC CD-ROM.

The first MechWarrior® game of real-time strategy and tactical command.

www.microprose.com
www.mechcommander.com

MICROPROSE

FASA CORPORATION

FASA INTERACTIVE™

Myth: The Fallen Lords

Innovation at last hits the real-time strategy genre

It seems we are always hearing claims of new and revolutionary games, and so many of us are constantly looking forward to the next big release. Sadly, we are often disappointed to find that a ground breaking idea is merely a poor variation on an over-used theme. Even with the shelves at software stores saturated with "me-too" titles, there occasionally appears something truly special that could alter the gaming industry for years to come. *Myth: The Fallen Lords*, is one such game.

Those who have not heard much of this game may immediately classify it as yet another real-time strategy game like many before. They would be right, to a point: *Myth* is a real-time strategy game with an emphasis on multiplayer battles. It is based in a medieval universe. The units are not overly original: knights, archers, dwarves and giants make up the backbone of one's force. Sounds like many an earlier game, right? And it would be like many other games if the similarity continued much farther, but any parallels to other releases stop here.

What makes *Myth* so great? Let's start with the perspective of the game. We've all seen the *Warcraft*-esque nearly top-down view of real-time strategy games. This kind of view has been dominant in the genre; one might wonder why different approaches weren't taken. Apparently Bungie wondered about that, too. Instead of the "God's eye" view, the player is placed relatively low over the battlefield with an angled perspective. From there one can move the field of vision in any direction; include rotation and revolution around a point, and the battle can be seen from any direction. While this does take a bit of practice to master, the help of a large-scale map overlaid in the top-right corner quickly gives the player a complete view of the battle.

Another great feature of *Myth* is the terrain: it's truly three-dimensional. There are rolling hills, valleys, cliffs, rivers, and lakes, to mention a few of the features of the terrain. Many different kinds of maps are included: snow, mud, sand, and barren rock are all seen. All of these look fantastic, with an impressive attention to detail. Troops leave visible tracks on maps with snow or sand, and if a group is wading across a stream, their reflections appear in the water. Additionally, levels aren't just collections of different terrain, but change through the game to match the plot line. Later maps have bubbling pools of lava and magical teleporters to deal with.

The level design is excellent, and the different types of terrain require very different strategies. However, it takes more than nice landscaping to draw a player in. Maps often include rain or snow; again, these effects look fantastic. The game also has a certain audio quality; instead of background music we hear birds chirping or water flowing or thunder rumbling. Each of these details may be unimportant separately, but together they create a very immersive and enjoyable gaming environment.

Now let us examine that which takes place within this environment. The units in *Myth* look good, but they lack the spectacular nature of the terrain. They are sprites – sets of two-dimensional pictures rather than three-dimensional models. While this does make the three-dimensional aspect of *Myth* incomplete, the effects on the feel and play of the game are negligible. This is a weakness of the game, but not a crucial one.

Despite the two-dimensional nature of the units, they look and behave quite well in action. The full visual spectacle of *Myth* cannot be fully appreciated until you see a battle in motion; here and only here does the power of the engine becomes apparent. Everything follows the laws of physics (with the possible exception of levitating undead lightning-wielding monsters). Arrows and grenades arc realistically to their targets no matter what angle the battle is being viewed from. A grenade may bounce a couple of times before detonating, and arrows that hit trees will break and fall to the ground. Objects don't disappear from the game and behave as you would expect them to, adding a lot to the environment; for example, an unexploded grenade will stay on the ground and can be picked up.

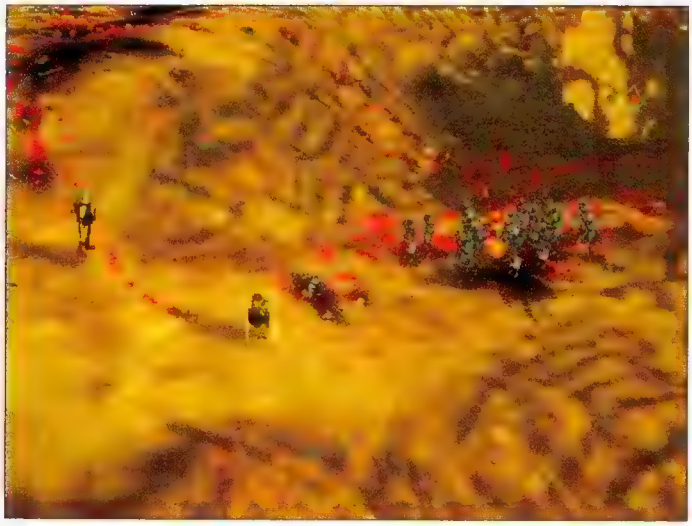
While the realism adds a lot to the game play, it also has side effects that not everyone may consider positive. When a soldier is hit by a grenade it explodes, sending various parts of its anatomy flying. A realistic por-

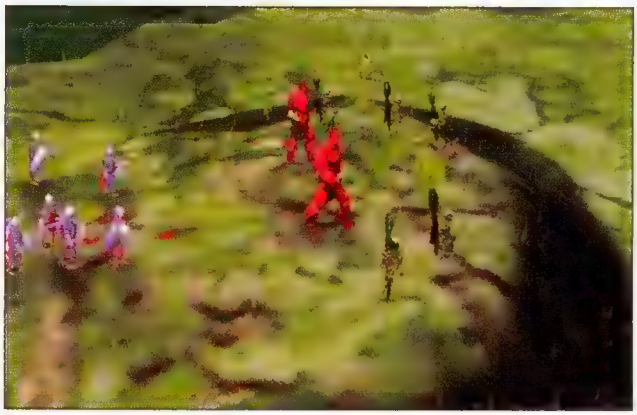
[clockwise from below]

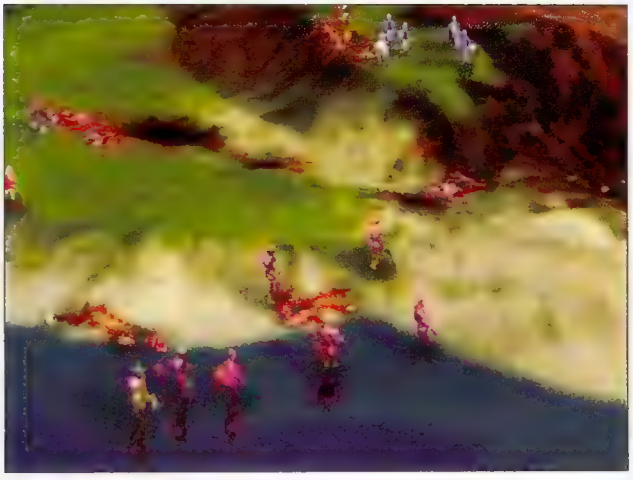
Forces battle for control of the flag in multiplayer

A dwarf on high ground can devastate an enemy force

A pair of trows overrun enemy forces





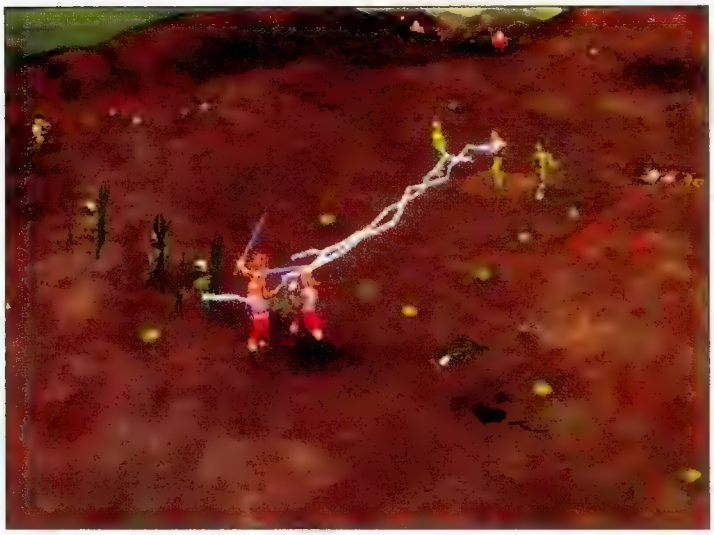


[clockwise from top]

Different weather conditions often play a major role

Evil Fetch can devastate forces with lightning

Archers are quite effective from afar



trayal of warfare includes realistic results. The graphics are quite impressive, but it can get somewhat gory. Bungie apparently realized this, so they decided to add a no-blood option; unfortunately, this option was not completed and is disabled in the initial release of *Myth*. This won't affect most players, but those with weak stomachs may want to consider this.

One of the most important aspects of *Myth* is multiplayer. Designed with Internet play in mind, it includes the option of direct Internet play, free access to the matchmaking service of bungie.net, and play over the Total Entertainment Network. One glaring omission to multiplayer options is that of direct modem play (strangely, the front of the box says modem-to-modem play exists, but the side does not). While this is clearly a shortcoming, it is easily circumvented if both players have dial-up Internet access. Internet play is generally good; even six player games usually have little lag (although there is the occasional disconnection that most Internet gamers are used to).

Once involved in a multiplayer game, players have many options to choose from; gone are the days of simply wiping out the enemy base. There are choices such as King of the Hill, Capture the Flag and Territories (in this one flags are distributed throughout the map, whoever has the most when time expires wins). There is even a game where opponents fight over a ball that can be kicked around the map; the last person to touch the ball is the winner. All of these battles require unique strategies. *Myth* is different from most other games of its genre in that there is no source if income, and there is no way to build more troops. This makes the strategy very intense; a clumsy attack in most games can be compensated for by building more units, but here a single engagement could cost the battle.

Another neat feature of multiplayer is the team game. Multiple players can share control of one army, with one designated as the captain. The captain can give (and take away) units to teammates. Large armies in *Myth* sometimes become difficult to control, but two good players can create a coordinated and devastating attack. Also, there is an option to allow "unit trading" in multiplayer games. Each type of unit has a point value, and players can trade units for other kinds, customizing their force. These features combine to make the game a unique and refreshing multiplayer environment.

Despite all the great features of online *Myth*, there is one significant drawback of bungie.net. Players are limited to one account per copy of the game, and every game played over bungie.net is tallied into your player statistics. So if your eight-year-old cousin wants to play over the Internet and you don't want your score to drop, there is not much you can do. Also, players new to the online arena will most likely lose their first couple of games, dropping their rank significantly.

Playing *Myth* online is excellent, but there is no shortage of single-player gaming. One interesting aspect of solo play is the use of animated, cartoon-like cut scenes. They lack the impressiveness of rendered three-dimensional battles, but it is nice to see a change of pace. The story line is better than most games of the genre and it is clear how each battle fits into advancing the plot. Moreover, missions are far more than variations of finding the enemy base and killing it. There are missions to disable teleporters, rescue captured allies, or escape from enemy territory; all of these are very well executed. A nice continuity also exists in single player *Myth*; surviving characters carry from one mission to the next. Characters gain experience by killing the enemy; those that survive a couple missions have very noticeable increases in effectiveness. Single player is thoroughly enjoyable; many games today ignore this aspect as more people swarm online, but here Bungie did a fine job.

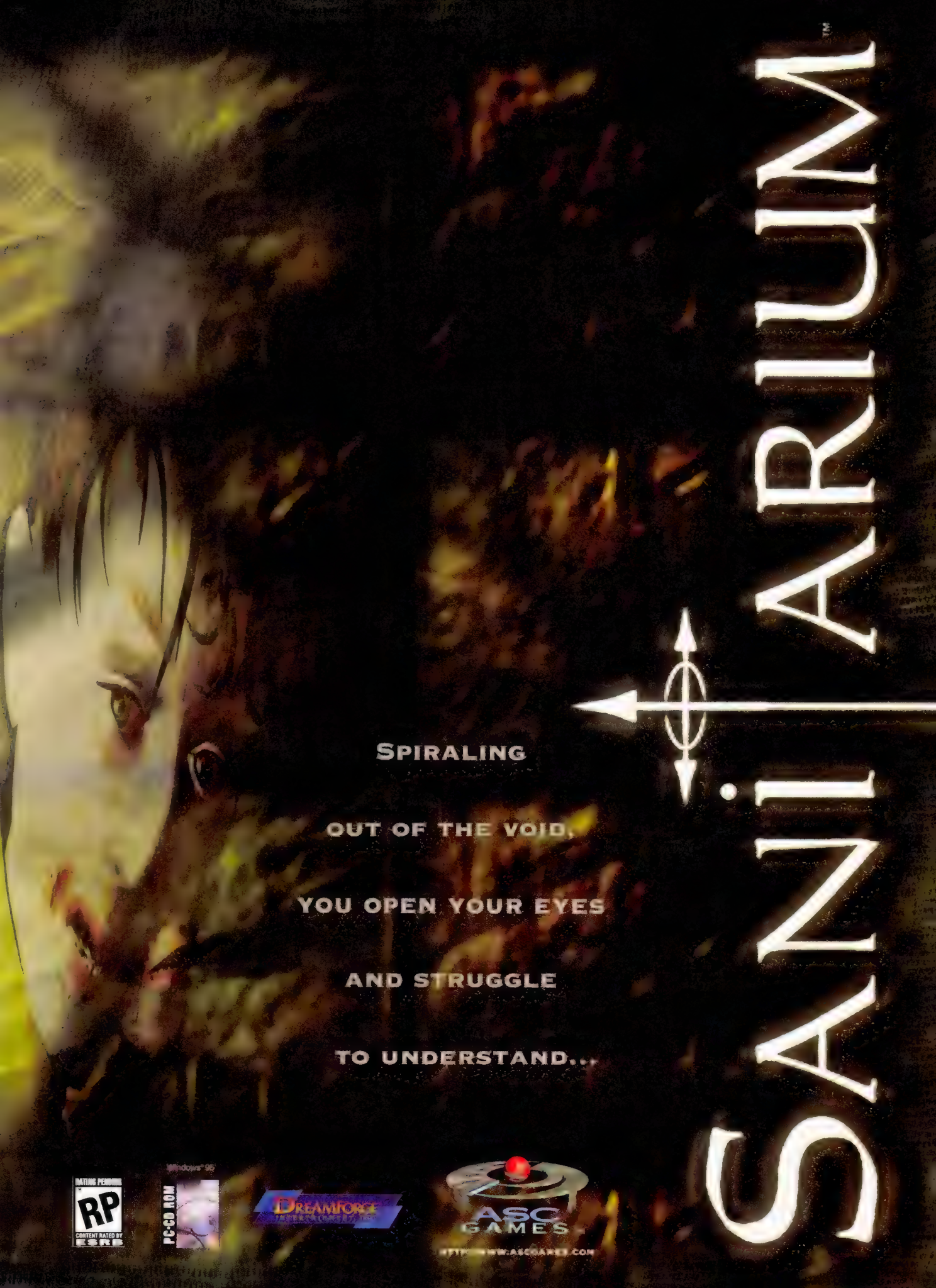
If one thing can be said about *Myth*, it is not a *Command & Conquer* clone. The popularity of the real-time strategy game is incredible; many titles have been attempts to cash in on this phenomenon. Unfortunately, most of these games are variations of older titles; but where many copied, Bungie created. Simply put, *Myth* is the probably the greatest innovation of real-time strategy in years; it clearly proves that there is still room for growth in a genre fallen prey to a myriad of clones. *–Ryan Brush*

★★★★★

Myth: The Fallen Lords

Bungie • www.bungie.com • Requirements: Windows 95 or NT 4.0, 133 MHz Pentium or higher, 16 MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM; MacOS, 100MHz PowerPC or faster, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-16 players, Internet, LAN

Sanitarium™ is a trademark of American Softworks Corporation. ©
is a trademark of American Softworks Corporation. Sanitarium is de
Microsoft Corporation. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interac


SANITARIUM
SPIRALING
OUT OF THE VOID,
YOU OPEN YOUR EYES
AND STRUGGLE
TO UNDERSTAND...
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
windows 95
PC-CD ROM
DREAMFORGE
ASC
GAMES

East Front

Where the (tarnished) Iron Crosses grow

The unit data screen – lots of info, but less than clear

After two successful years of *Battleground* games, TalonSoft is embarking on a new game line, the *Campaign Series*. The debut title, *East Front*, is a platoon-level tactical game covering fighting between Germany and the Soviet Union in WWII. It replaces the earlier games' hand-painted maps with tile-based boards, rotatable and compatible with a random map generator and scenario editor. Units are modeled from miniatures, with lovingly detailed tanks and guns and somewhat less impressive infantry. While the video clips that graced the *Battleground* series have gone AWOL, *East Front* retains the extensive library of digitized sound effects that is also a TalonSoft hallmark. For the first time (excepting *Age of Sail*, anyway), TalonSoft also includes a campaign game, random battles, and a full editor, to accompany the host of pre-built scenarios. Full multiplayer support rounds out the package.

The 2D map looks great

Just who this game is aimed at, however, is puzzling. While the box boasts of great historical detail, and celebrates an "all-star" cast of wargaming luminaries who contributed scenarios, it also features lines like "Teeth Clenching Armored Warfare!" and "Thundering Armor at your fingertips in stunning High Color!," and promises "Fast-paced, explosive action." Hardly calculated to appeal to the wargaming hardcore, to whom such expressions conjure up images of *Command & Conquer* rather than Stalingrad or Kursk. Yet the sheer volume of units, unit types, scenarios, and options in the game, as well as its scale and subject matter, work against it as a more casual wargame. The result of this confusion is a game *in* the box that suffers from the same lack of focus displayed *on* the box.

At first blush, though, *East Front* is exciting. The 3D views are spectacular, the variety of units, battles, and environments fascinating, and the number of options intriguing. Unfortunately, the bloom fades rather rapidly from rose, and what begins as a hot date soon degenerates into watch-watching, napkin-fidgeting tedium. Good pre-built scenarios are marred by poor to bad AI, while the campaign game replaces the thrill of WWII combat with the boredom of fifty-two pickup as players attempt to gather their scattered forces, victims of the game's woeful deployment routines. What is supposed to be an epic clash between two bitterly opposed military, political, and social systems instead becomes a lackluster melee between hordes of relatively undifferentiated and all-too-similar units. Despite its generous helpings of eye-candy and options, *East Front* never delivers the satisfying, immersive gaming experience that it should.

Problems with the game are legion. For starters, the manual is wretched, almost unbelievably so. The author wrote it in a loose, chatty style that is not only inappropriate, but infuriating, and manages to say virtually nothing of value (possibly excepting the sections on the scenario editor). Anyone unfamiliar with wargames will certainly get little help here, and might very well decide to return to *Civilization* instead. Then again, the utter lack of information and detail about the actual game system, or even any real data covering terrain, combat, and mechanics, is likely to infuriate the experienced gamer, who is hoping to gain some sense of how things work in *East Front*. Even worse, the game shipped in a lamentable state, with numerous bugs, missing features, and a campaign system that was almost DOA; though TalonSoft has been assiduous in releasing patches, the fact remains the game never should have left the company in the state that it did. If anything is calculated to turn off both veteran and new players, incomplete and broken software is it.

Deploying units with the scenario editor

Though TalonSoft has released a few patches at this writing, problems remain. Information is poorly presented, with vital data often residing in up to three separate locations, confusing both veteran and newbie alike. Some information is simply missing, such as a visual terrain chart that shows examples of each hex and hexside type. Other data, such as unit organization information, is present, but hard to use effectively. Commonly accessed data like range and combat values are not displayed clearly, but are buried in poorly organized and presented charts and tables, or appear in cryptic pop-up tags which test both players' speed reading skills and their dexterity. The button for switching from move to fire mode is much too near the button to end the turn, and though the cursor changes shape to mark mode switches, it's all too easy to move a unit by mistake, with usually dire consequences.

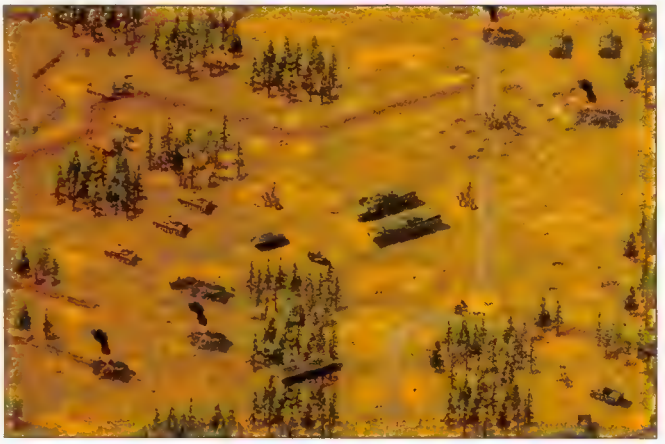
Such problems make *East Front* a doubtful choice for inexperienced gamers. In a double whammy, though, the game lacks many features dear to the hearts of veteran gamers. The only concessions to modeling command and control are supply rules, which are rather silly in a game with six minute turns and battles lasting usually 90-120 minutes, and leaders, which simply boost morale and performance of units in their stacks. This results in battles between mobs of faceless, generally undifferentiated units; the Wehrmacht and the Red Army are different only because they use different tanks, not because they think, move, and fight differently. Due to the 250 meter/hex scale, and the relatively short effective ranges of WWII ordnance, tank battles end up as assaults in more cases than not, robbing players of any tactical flexibility. And while infantry units are refreshingly durable, some units, notably mortars and HQs, seem blessed with divine protection from damage during assaults.

The computer opponent leaves much to be desired as well, preferring headlong charges towards victory point locations to any other tactic. Most battles against the AI are effectively over long before time runs out. This is particularly true during *East Front*'s great disappointment, the campaign game. Potentially the highlight of the game, the campaign allows players to command a formation through a series of randomly-generated battles, from 1941 to 1945 or for shorter periods. Unfortunately, the inability of the computer to deploy forces intelligently, the sheer volume of (poorly deployed) units under player control at anything above battalion level, the sameness of the maps, the ineptitude of the computer opponent, and the sheer time it takes to fight WWII in weekly battles adds up to a miserable experience. Miserable, because the concept is so attractive, and the execution so bad. At higher command levels, many of the forces under player control are useless, and players spend more time struggling against their own computer-induced disorganization than against the enemy. After a half-dozen or so of these battles, which often last 20 or more turns and take hours of real-time to complete, most gamers will be ready to surrender.

The net result of all of these problems make *East Front* one of the great wargaming disappointments of recent years. It *can* be fun, in certain cases: play by email works well, and at least provides a competent opponent. Network and Internet play work, but are prone to glitches. Even against a human, though, *East Front* never delivers the "feel" that a WWII tactical game should; problems of scale, system, and execution make that impossible. True, players can build gorgeous and large scenarios covering just about any WWII Russo-German battle, but however well-designed, they won't play out in very satisfying fashion. The only real benefit from having 250m hexes and six minute turns is the ability of simulate large battles; battles thus simulated, however, aren't very interesting. The essence of a tactical game is decision making, and the game system in *East Front* makes most of the decisions one would expect in a game such as this irrelevant. The scale is too coarse to make the real differences between weapon systems truly relevant, and the lack of command and control rules renders command decisions moot as well.

Whether TalonSoft is aiming *East Front* at grognards or at novices is immaterial; the game is too rough for newbies and too simplistic for the old guard. It does have compelling subject matter, great maps, multiplayer support, and a good editor, so it's not without merit, but the core game is not the most encouraging basis on which to build a new series. Too much is left over from the old *Ardennes/Bulge* days, and there's very little new to make up for it. The failure of the campaign game (and without the patches, the campaign is basically unplayable) is particularly damaging, as that is one area where TalonSoft had a chance to really shine. At least Avalon Hill should be taking heart; with their own *PanzerBlitz* in development, the field is still clear for a good WWII Russian Front tactical game. TalonSoft had the chance to seize the high ground with *East Front*, but their assault was repulsed with heavy losses. Flawed execution and a lack of focus are fatal in battle, and they're fatal in game design too. With an expansion pack due in early 1998, and a Western Front version of the game due in summer, there is ample time to redress the faults in *East Front*; one can only hope that TalonSoft does so.

–Robert Mayer



Clash of armor – a close-range fire fight...

...and with unit bases turned on

★★½☆☆

East Front

TalonSoft • www.talonsoft.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 486 or higher, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 player, Internet, LAN, modem, PBEM, hotseat

Steel Panthers III

The evolution (not revolution) in military affairs

Steel Panthers III Brigade Command: 1939-1999 is the latest evolution of the *Panthers* series, which began on the individual vehicle and squad level. Now, players move platoons and can have entire divisions to command on the screen at a single time. Players who know and love the conventions from the first two games in the series, such as point and click movement and fire, available movement hexes highlighted, and picking core forces for campaigns which grow in experience, will be pleased with this version of the game.

The biggest change is in the scale: units are now platoons of five or so vehicles, and up to 50 plus personnel. Command control is now a crucial aspect of game play. Units are assigned an Advance or Defend mission, and performing actions within those limits requires unit leaders to issue "orders." Units that lack the requisite leadership will, quite literally, do nothing. Indirect fire weapons, mostly artillery, have much more influence on the battlefield. Formerly off-board artillery, air, and mortars are now placed on the map, and when properly used will shape the battlefield decisively by inflicting casualties, screening, and suppressing the enemy. Graphically and mechanically, not much has changed in the system. The result is an evolutionary improvement on a good game engine that results in a challenging representation of combined arms warfare.

[top right] **The British 1st Armored Division slams into the Iraqi Republican Guard during Operation Desert Storm**

[below] **A desperate island battle between the USMC and Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces during World War II**

The game offers the same choices between scenarios and campaigns as the previous games. The available six campaigns are North Africa 1941-42 (German only), Stalingrad 1942 (German), Market Garden 1944 (British), Vietnam 1964-71 (U.S.), NATO 1988 (West German), Holy War 2000 (Israel), and the Campaign Generator, which permits the player to pick the nationalities and forces involved. There are also 40 scenarios (and the capability to store up to 200) with fixed order of battle and victory conditions. In the campaigns, players purchase their Core Units which are carried forward from scenario to scenario, Support Units which change each scenario, and auxiliaries which change each time and do not carry forward. This is very similar to the earlier games. An improvement is the increased availability of field fortifications and mines. There is also a Battle Generator which allows players to create scenarios quickly and an editor for the creation of battles or campaigns from a clean slate. As seen in the first two games, players can use these to fashion their favorite situations and distribute them over the Internet.

The strengths of the game are ease of play, quantity of unit types, equipment, and nationalities represented, and ability to generate hypothetical scenarios. Technology, primarily in the form of Main Battle Tank (MBT) models, has a great impact on the outcome of battles, but just as important is the proper management of command and control (C2), terrain, and fires (mortar, artillery, and air support). Players can move units by individual platoons or by companies by toggling between buttons. This ability must be used carefully, since the AI may not move platoons to the "best" terrain. Mounting and dismounting units from their transport requires the same degree of care to prevent unintentional problems. An interesting feature that some may find annoying is the hex information feature; this displays all information about the hex, including units present, their condition, terrain, elevation, etc. Since this can obscure other units and activities, it can quickly become a hindrance. Sensing this, SSI indicates in the README file that this function can be disabled by turning the HEX INFO button in the preferences screen off. In short, players can modify just about any aspect of the game they see fit.

This flexibility and range of capabilities makes *Steel Panthers III* a winning tactical level game. Those individuals who stayed up late fighting their perfect force across the steppes or Pacific will find the same capabilities on a much larger scale. The addition of command and control, greater infantry and indirect fire capabilities, and the increased scale adds depth and gives players an excellent feel for the leadership and management challenges faced by leaders on the modern battlefield. These strengths outweigh the similar graphics and relatively simple modeling of C2 and weapons capabilities. Those interested in simulating those effects with more depth can go to *Panthers in the Shadows* or *Tigers on the Prowl*. The game continues the excellent system begun in the earlier games and builds on that foundation. Evolution, not revolution, in the watchword and so far, SSI has captured the objective with this approach. If you enjoyed those earlier games, *Steel Panthers III* is a "must buy" for you. *–Richard Lechowich*

★★★★☆

Steel Panthers III Brigade Command: 1939-1999

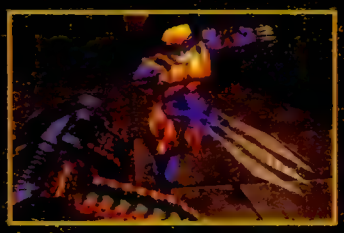
SSI • www.ssionline.com • Requirements: DOS, 486DX2/66 or higher, 16 MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 players, hotseat and PBEM

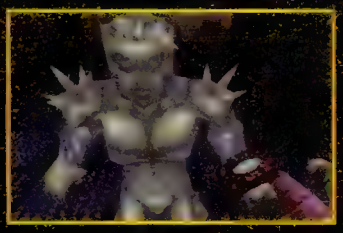
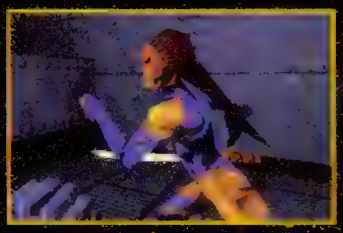
MARVEL INTERACTIVE

X-MEN®

THE RAVAGES OF APOCALYPSE™

A QUAKE® TOTAL CONVERSION



THIS IS NOT THE GAME OF QUAKE® YOU ONCE KNEW.
THE X-MEN HAVE TAKEN OVER AND NOW IT'S A WHOLE NEW GAME.

This product is in no way affiliated with, nor will it be supported by, Id Software, Inc.

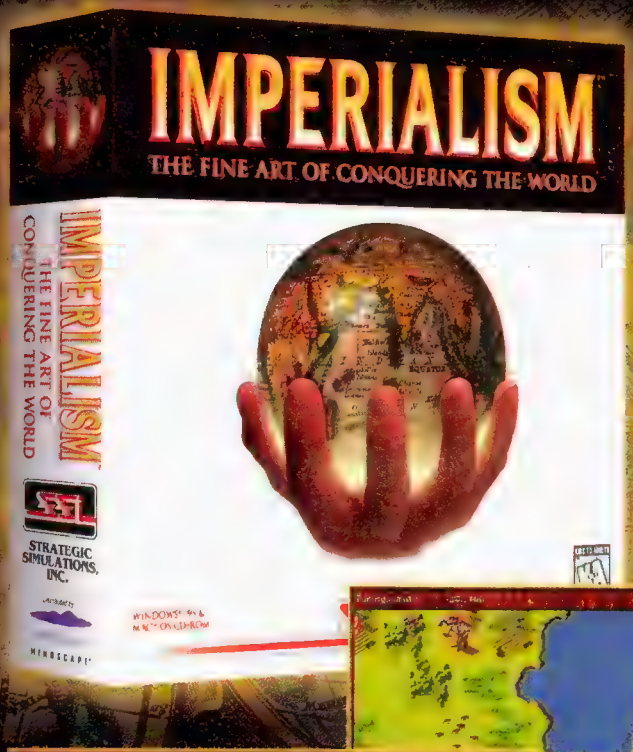
Exclusively Distributed by GT Interactive Software

WIZARD Works
A GT Interactive Software Company

Available Now
at retailers everywhere!

©1997 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Marvel Interactive, X-Men, all Marvel character names and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. and are used with permission. Quake® is a registered trademark of Id Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

Build and



"There are many successful empire-building games, but Imperialism reduces the concept to its essence."
—GameSpot

"Starting a new game session starts the addictiveness all over again."
—Computer Games Strategy Plus

"Imperialism is blessed with as good an AI as I have seen in a computer game."
—Computer Gaming World

BUILD A NATION AND CONQUER THE WORLD!

Combining elements of resource management, economic trade, exploration, diplomatic maneuvering and military conquest, IMPERIALISM challenges you to attempt what few in history have dared: *unify the world under one leader!* To achieve victory you must develop your country's infrastructure through deft manipulation of delicate economic, diplomatic and military resources. Then, skillfully maneuver it to a position of dominance in the Council of Governors. Your Cabinet Ministers will, of course, offer varying amounts of advice. But, whether you engage a single opponent head-to-head or join a 7-player network challenge, ultimate control over your nation's fate – and the fate of the world – is yours and yours alone.

WINDOWS® 95 & Mac® OS CD-ROM
www.imperialism.com
Developed by Frog City.

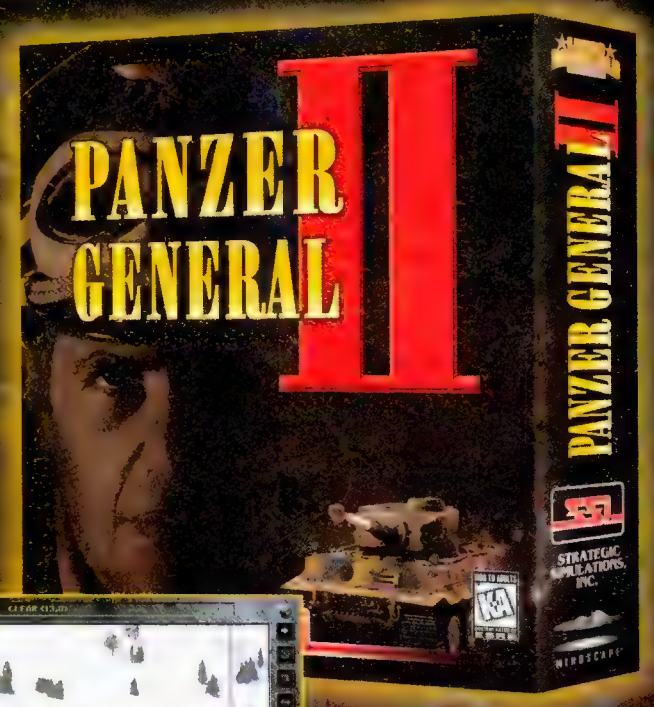
TO ORDER: Visit your retailer or call 1-800-234-3088 (USA & Canada) with Visa/MasterCard.

Conquer!

"It is the sleekest, most beautiful, most criminally addictive wargame since, well, since the original. It should be a sensational hit, and it deserves to be."
—*PC Gamer, Editor's Choice*

"As the catalyst used to unveil a new, vastly improved series engine, the game wildly exceeds expectations..."
—*Computer Games Strategy Plus*

"This Panzer is anything but a retread. Addictive, fun, easy and yet subtle."
—*Computer Gaming World, Five-Star Review*



LEAD AN ARMY AND CONQUER YOUR ENEMY!

PANZER GENERAL® II. More than a sequel. An entire generation beyond anything yet seen in strategy games. And seeing is believing. Witness the Living Battlefield, a new standard for strategy game artwork. Thirty painstakingly crafted battlefields that are faithful to the real ones of WWII. Of course, this beauty goes beyond skin deep. The phenomenal game play of the second generation Panzer General game engine is truly awesome. Battles rage through WWII's Eastern and Western Fronts, North Africa, even the continental USA. All new campaigns and scenarios feature the classic battles fought at Dessau, Leningrad, Malta, Tobruk and more. Multiplayer battles, of up to 4 players, feature 12 scenarios specifically designed for multiplayer action!

WINDOWS 95 CD-ROM
www.panzergeneral.com
Developed by the SSI Special Projects Group.

Play Panzer General II online at: *www.clubssi.com*

SSI
A MINDSCAPE® COMPANY

Strategic Simulations, Inc. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective holders.

The Tone Rebellion

Real time strategy meets Charlotte's Galactic Web

Somewhere deep inside the eccentric bowels of *The Tone Rebellion* is one of the most creative concepts ever to grace the PC. Like Tolkien, the designers conceptualized not just a story, but an entire fantasy world with its own rules and principles.

As the manual describes, the essence of life is Tone. Everything in the game derives directly or indirectly from this cosmic libation. Players begin on a planetary fragment, constructing the necessary buildings and stockpiling resources. Littered on these landscapes are pools of Tone (think of them as ingrown Tone ales). These pools are tapped by the various available devices for construction, magic, or the creation of crystal Tone. An excess of Tone eventually outputs floaters, who do manual labor and can be converted into fighters and wizards.

[top right] **Harvesting Tone keeps devices operable. A surplus of tone makes new floaters**

[below] **This colony is still very much in its infancy, and needs a Dojo for defensive reasons**

Obtaining a key for each (here's a tricky one) bridge opens up new planet fragments to explore and colonize. Gorgeous and surreal backdrops give each newly discovered landscape a unique theme. Menu screens and information panels offer a polished look, with all the basic functions – once they're deciphered – readily available. *The Tone Rebellion* shines as an unparalleled artistic achievement. The musical score and ambient background chords hit the bulls-eye, creating a perfect mood from the orbital harmonics. Only *Star Control 2* did a better job making the science fiction setting feel downright creepy.

Folks who play on the easiest mode will miss some of the elements that render this game without a quantifiable genre to attach it to. A tide counter ebbs and flows, cyclically modifying the strength of each race. All four races control vastly different spell types. The game dictates an unusual conservation edict whereby the need to *manage*, not just spit out, resources governs success or failure.

The menagerie of creatures live up to the term "Floaters." Shimmying across the landscapes, they resemble something out of a film on Lamaze for gazelles. The only interaction between players and these microbiology minions comes through modifying the task list or giving orders to buildings. For the most part, these beings act logically, completing their assigned tasks while remaining aware of activities around them (like being attacked). Workers spend most of their existence ferrying the necessary resources to and from each structure. Otherwise, they labor away at the activities on the task list, which becomes the main focus of the game when not under attack.

A thick manual details the fascinating history of the game's universe and cameos many of the items that populate the game. While it covers the objects in the game in great detail, it fails miserably at describing where each piece fits into the designers' private universe. Without a real world example to equate much of the game to (a tribute to how original it really is), most players will be overwhelmed by fluff and under-whelmed by the lack of needed data.

Unlike other strategy games, expansion only occurs horizontally, like a metabolically challenged *Defender*. Opening up new sections of landscape requires the construction of Tone Spreaders near the edge of the current view screen. Enemy beasts tend to hover just beyond the visible portion of the map, pelting your creatures and wreaking havoc on your constructions. Floaters don't give enough information about their current activity when clicked on. Buildings of the same type offer no clues about their whereabouts; rather, they have a colored dot above their icon (if they're *really* good, they get a gold star and a cookie). This makes telling remote buildings and floaters apart a nightmare, unless you're adept at committing colored dot designations to memory. One really has to strain to make multi-player competitive. The game insists on cooperative play in a rather staged attempt to infuse that "friendship ring meets campfire *Kum ba ya* chorus" camaraderie.

As the game progresses, it becomes clear that the freedom to implement different strategies has definite limits. At times, you gets the feeling that they're following an unwritten agenda, playing an amniotic rendition of *Simon Says*. However, once resigned to the fact that *The Tone Rebellion* more closely typifies a puzzle game rather than true strategy, it elicits a subtle yet powerful charm.

If Pink Floyd ever starts their own interactive media division, *The Tone Rebellion* will be the prototype for all their real time strategy endeavors. It's bizarre to the extreme, yet charming and inviting at the same time. Play it for 10 minutes, and you'll hate it. Play it 10 hours, and it entertains as expected. *–Tim Royal*

★★★☆☆

The Tone Rebellion

The Logic Factory • www.logicfactory.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial

STAR COMMAND
DELUXE
VIOLENCE. REVOLUTION. GENOCIDE. AND OCCASIONALLY, ALL OUT WAR.
JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE GALAXY.
So what if it's not politically correct? It's a game. A strategic challenge that tests your mettle as well as your mind. See, while you're blowing away ships from the baddest races in the galaxy, you've got to build your own killer space armada. If you survive. Star Command Deluxe. Not just your everyday blood and gore.
Unlimited free on-line play!
MICRO TECH
MARKETING SERVICES, INC.
Available 11/97. Impatient? Download the demo @
www.metro3d.com
Metropolis Digital
KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

SEVEN KINGDOMS™

Designed by Trevor Chan

A REAL-TIME SAGA OF INTRIGUE
AND DIPLOMACY, OF TRADE,
CONQUEST AND ESPIONAGE.

Long ago, in a time when the lives of men, monsters and gods were intertwined, seven kingdoms vied for supremacy; each grew to have its own distinct identity, possessing unique skills and traditions. Their tools of conquest were trade, diplomacy, espionage, science and sheer brute force. By strength, cunning and guile they expanded their burgeoning empires, fighting against the ravages of nature, sometimes against rival kingdoms and sometimes against uprisings from within.

- Real-time empire building with seven unique cultures
- Multiplayer options via modem, LAN, serial or Internet
- Pre-built scenarios and random campaign generator for unlimited gameplay
- Espionage and counter espionage with trade and diplomatic options
- Highly detailed 800 x 600 SVGA graphics

Windows '95 CD-ROM

Visit your local retailer or call 1-800-789-1543 to order a copy today!

www.imagicgames.com

"...may easily become the most addictive game of all time. It's that fun."

—PC Games

WORMS 2™

THE CULT CLASSIC IS BACK!

Welcome to the bizarre cartoon world of Worms2.™ This addictive game of revenge and mean-minded cruelty features a mind-blowing array of wacky weapons. Witty speech, dynamite sound effects and original music. Brain-tickling strategy and politically correct violence. Go it alone Wormbo-style against 17 other Worms in the 18 player hot-seat game, or wage 6 player mayhem over a LAN or the Internet!

www.worms2.com

WINDOWS 95

If you're breathing, you won't be able to stop playing it!

Visit your local retailer or call 24 hours:
1-800-695-GAME (U.S. and Canada)

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

TEAM17
www.team17.com

KA
KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Worms 2 © Team17 Software Ltd. All rights reserved. Game designed and developed by Team17. Team17 and Worms2 are trademarks or registered trademarks of Team17 Software Ltd. Original concept by Andy Davidson.
MicroProse is a registered trademark of MicroProse, Inc. or its affiliated companies. All other trademarks are the property of their respective holders.

Cheat Thrills

Feeling the need for Need for Speed II SE

I have here in my hands the best arcade racing game of the year, *Need for Speed II SE*, but I'm a wee-bit angry about its existence. Why did we have to suffer through *Need for Speed II* – this is the version of the game that should have been released earlier this year. From our review of that game: "...it requires the fastest Pentium on the planet to run at a decent frame rate... [and] could have been made a helluva lot sexier with a 3D card, and it also might run on something less than a Pentium II."

Guess what? The new 3Dfx-enhanced *SE* version runs as smoothly on a 133MHz Pentium as it does a 266MHz Pentium II. The improved frame rate may directly contribute to the improved handling, and the addition of force-feedback support is well-implemented, albeit exhausting. Overall, it's an immensely entertaining arcade racing game with possibly the best visuals on the market. Just bought a 3Dfx card? Here's the new demonstration software to humble your console-owning friends.

The only problem with the game is why it even exists in the first place. Why is this a full-priced product when, for owners of *Need for Speed II*, it feels more like it should be a patch? Maybe it's more than a patch. Why not charge $15-$20 for it and call it an add-on for owners of the original, adding 3-4 new tracks and cars.

Alternately, EA could have added a whole set of new tracks and cars and called it *Need for Speed III* or *Need for Speed 98*. It's hard to understand why it would take so long to produce the actual tracks, especially when they dole out a miserly seven per yearly version. It probably takes them longer to add those beautiful video clips that everyone watches once then forgets. (As an aside, watching the superb clips in *SE* makes you wonder why every developer on the planet doesn't just give up on Quicktime and Video for Windows and just go with MPEG.)

If you own a 3Dfx card and never purchased *Need for Speed II*, rush out and buy *Need for Speed II SE*. It's a fantastic game. If you already own *Need for Speed II*, you have to decide whether or not it's worth a grand total of around $80 (the cost of the original + the *SE* version - $20 rebate) for the definitive version of the game. I'd say it's not that good, but your mileage may vary. *–Steve Bauman*

[top to bottom] Look, it's a two-headed monkey

Ooh, donuts... is there anything they can't do?

This drag-racing dino is available by typing GO43

The Bomber BFS car. Type BOMBER at the main menu

CHEATER

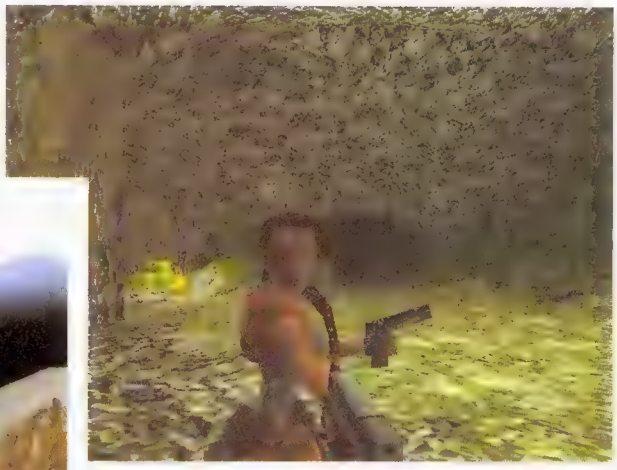
Need for Speed II SE

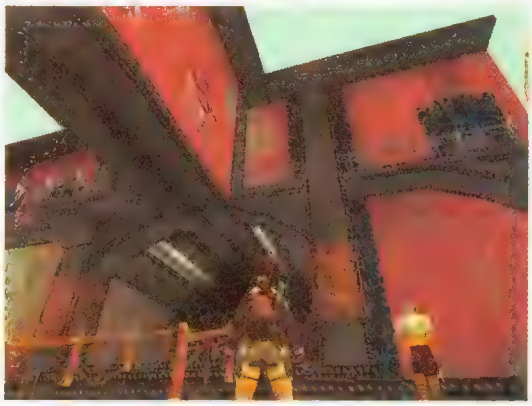
Type all of these codes at the main menu:

HOLLYWOOD	Secret track enable
BOMBER	Bomber BFS car
FZR 2000	FZR 2000 car
TOMBSTONE	NASCAR car
PIONEER	Engine upgrade
GO18	School bus
GO43	T-Rex
GO48	Log
GO50	Box of beer
VIP	Limousine
MAD	Cow dust
SLOT	Slot car mode
CHASE	Cars follow you
SLIP	Slippery tracks
RUSHHOUR	More traffic

Tomb Raider II

Lara Croft returns to action





[top to bottom]

Ms. Croft shows off her guns

The addition of vehicles adds a lot to the game

You still get that sense of awe when you explore some of the environments

That'll be enough of that...

Unlike movies, most game sequels are superior to the original. Engines get refined, missing features are added and technological advances substitute for a lack of new ideas. Unfortunately, *Tomb Raider II* bucks that trend by being inferior to the original *Tomb Raider*. Even though its technology is more refined, with support for Direct3D out of the box, it lacks the original game's flair and superior level design.

This adventure finds our intrepid heroine/explorer/fashion-model Lara Croft trying to find the Dagger of Xian. The trip takes her from the Great Wall of China to the canals of Venice and from the bowels of a sunken ship to the mountains of Tibet. She's armed with some new weapons, sports a few new moves, can drive a speedboat (somewhat interesting) and a snowmobile (thoroughly entertaining – let's have "Lara Croft Snow Racing" right now), but overall it's still the same Lara we've come to know and love. She remains an endearing silicon(e) hero, capable of the impossible physical feats known only to men with weird European names.

Unfortunately, many of the interesting destinations of the first game are nowhere to be found in the sequel. For a game called *Tomb Raider*, you spend an inordinate amount of time in rather mundane and boring locations. The three levels that make up the Venice portion of the game are clever in the sense of puzzle design, but make no sense whatsoever. Realism shouldn't be a goal in a game like this, but you're more willing to accept traps in an ancient tomb – we've all seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. So why are there boxes that swing across passageways in an opera house? (What propels them? Why does Lara die if she touches them?) There's no real-world equivalent for Lara, so why should the game put her in a situation that tries to replicate a real-world environment?

The levels that take place in a sunken ship are equally illogical, but that's less of an issue because they're just boring, with dull and uninspiring puzzles. Moving boxes are boring – this isn't "Lara Croft: Furniture Mover." Exploring ancient tombs is exciting. These levels also show one of the game's big design flaws – all of the areas are populated by human enemies in addition to the animals of the original. You can live with a lion that runs in circles when it's being fired on; however, when it's a worker or ninja, it just shows how nonexistent the AI is.

While the 3D engine is more polished, it still has a few glitches here and there. Dead characters can appear floating in mid-air or half-buried when killed on an incline – this is a problem when you need what they're carrying. One particular bug discovered during play almost makes the game impossible to finish. On the "Floating Islands" level, flipping a switch causes a block to appear in a lava stream. If you flip the switch a second time, the block remains, but you now fall through it when you jump to it. Unfortunately, you need to be able to stand on the block to exit the lava stream.

Despite all of these criticisms, there's still that sense of wonder and awe you get when you enter a new location, and the compulsion to explore and discover new areas is just as strong. The later levels, set in Tibet, are more reminiscent of the original game and help reinforce the strengths this game has over other like-minded games. Had all of the levels been more like these, the game would be a lot more satisfying.

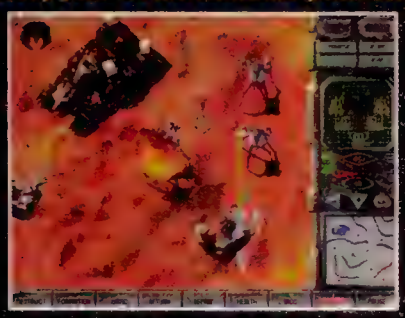
Ultimately *Tomb Raider II*, however flawed or disappointing it may be, is still superior in design and concept to most other 3D shooters. Its emphasis on single-player exploration and level design still feels fresh, and Lara Croft remains a fetching lead character. If there are to be more installments in the series, the designers would be well-advised to send her back into ancient tombs full of twisted traps. She seems more at home there, and so does the game. *–Steve Bauman*

★★★½☆

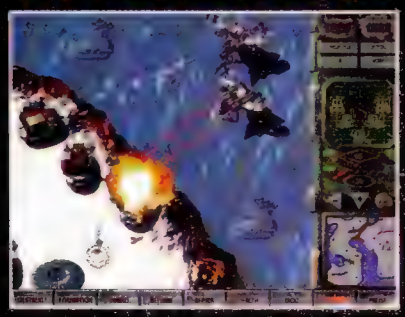
Tomb Raider II

Eidos Interactive • www.tombraider.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

UNSURPASSED CUSTOMIZATION OF WAR MACHINES.
Only your brain will save your ass.



SUPERIOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.
It's probably smarter than you.



ZOOM IN, THEN ZOOM OUT.
(When it's too painful to watch.)

WILL IT HAPPEN TO YOU?

EXTREME TACTICS™

DEVISE • DESIGN • DESTROY

MEDIA STATION INC.

www.extremetactics.com

© 1997 Media Station, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Extreme Tactics is a trademark of Media Station, Inc. Media Station is a registered trademark of Media Station, Inc.

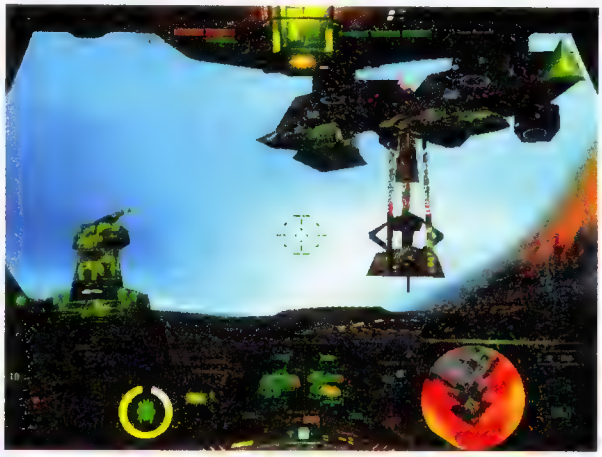
Discover a new horizon
in classic AD&D® role playing.
BALDUR'S GATE takes you back to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® on a visually dazzling, real-time RPG experience. This wondrous place, where true role playing on a grand scale first began, now comes alive in stunning graphic detail. Your quest? Lead a party of adventurers on a journey to save the Sword Coast region from a sinister plot that involves impending war, dark prophecies, betrayed alliances...even your own soul.
Huge game world - 5 CDs filled with nearly 10,000 game screens in striking SVGA, all rendered in glorious 16-bit color
Authentic AD&D® characters, each represented accurately on-screen down to individual class, race, gender, skin and hair color, armor and weaponry
Incredibly detailed structures and environments; dynamic lighting; day/night, rain, snow, fog, and lightning effects
Manage up to a 6-character party on a gripping, non-linear adventure spanning seven chapters with multiple twisting subplots
Baldur's Gate
ARRIVING SPRING, 1998
Interplay
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.
www.interplay.com
TSR
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
FORGOTTEN REALMS
BIOWARE
RP
©1997 BioWare Corp. All rights reserved. ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, AD&D, FORGOTTEN REALMS and the TSR logo are registered trademarks of TSR, Inc. BALDUR'S GATE is a trademark of TSR, Inc. Interplay is a trademark of Interplay Productions. TSR is a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Uprising

Succulent action with a pinch of tangy strategy

Action or strategy? Let's put this matter to rest right now. *Uprising* is definitely an action game. While there are certainly some strategic elements to it, the same could be said for most good action games. However, the fast reflexes and accurate aiming needed for successful play in this game won't be found in a hardcore strategy gamer's arsenal.

Uprising is a first-person tank shooter set in the far future. A band of disgruntled rebels is taking on the Imperium, or the Dominion, or the Empire, or whatever, and guess who's the point man? That's right, you and your trusty Wraith, a vehicle that is both tank and mobile command center. Using imaging and replication technology, you're teleported to the surface of one planet after another in order to drive the natives into submission and kick the Imperium off the planet. In order to do so, you pilot your Wraith across the undulating terrain (wonderfully rendered, especially in the 3Dfx version), blowing the bejesus out of all manner of bad guys and building bases to generate alternative resources.



[top to bottom]

A power generator is delivered

A lone enemy grunt, lost on a lava world

The satellite view is where you build your base. Note we can keep an eye on the Wraith in the lower-right window

This is where the strategic confusion comes from. There are certain predefined areas of the game map where you can call in a Citadel, a huge gun turret. After you've done that, you can erect factories to build infantry, tanks, AAVs (fighter jets), bombers, and so on. An energy building extracts power from the ground, and thus energy becomes a resource much like those in many real-time strategy games. The factories crank out units which go into a pattern buffer (being a *Star Trek* fan helps with the in-game jargon). Once ready, you can "project" them from the buffer to any location you can see. Sneak up to any enemy base, teleport in some tanks and troops, then sit back and watch the chaos.

The object of most missions is simply to wipe out all resistance. You generally do this by building a base, attacking an enemy citadel or base and, once eliminated, calling in your own citadel in the now vacated location. In this way you leapfrog across the terrain, taking and rebuilding a string of bases. Energy is finite, and will run out at each location. Only by continually expanding will you have enough to keep on fighting.

Your Wraith mounts a laser and missiles to begin with, and you can add more weapons of destruction as you progress through the game. The Wraith feels very tank-like (with the exception of it being able to strafe). For instance, if you try to climb too steep a hill it'll peter out and start to slide backwards. And coming over a ridge, it can be hard to see dead ahead until your front end drops. Very nicely done.

You earn cash for the successful completion of a mission, and back at HQ you'll spend this cash to upgrade technologies. You can create more capable infantry, tanks, and so on, or you can upgrade your Wraith, improving armor or existing weapons, adding new weapons, even buying more lives to take into the next mission. Getting the right mix of technologies can take a few restarts, so save before you upgrade.

The sense of "being there" in this game is simply stunning. Scooting around the battlefield, seeing AA turrets shoot down enemy bombers and watching them come auguring in, seeing hapless infantry charge up a hill to assault a citadel, only to be cut down by laser fire, buildings starting to burn as they take damage… it's one of the most immersive experiences you'll find in today's computer games.

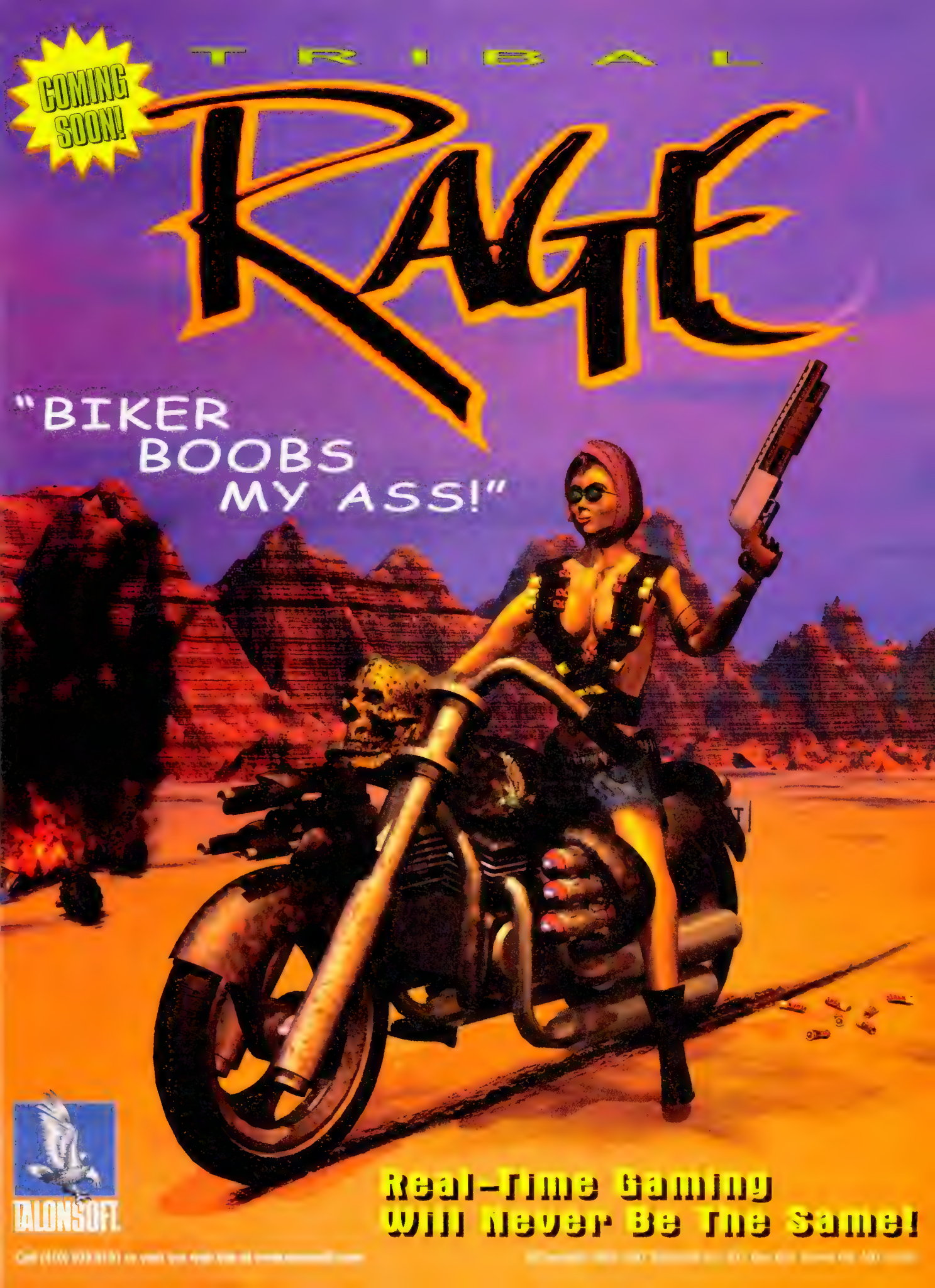
There are only two gripes to discuss. The first is lock-ups – they aren't frequent, but they're there (don't be surprised if the second tutorial mission locks up as you enter it – it happened on at least two systems). Just save a lot and you'll be fine. The second gripe is that some missions go beyond challenging and enter the realm of frustration. This is especially true when you find you pretty much needed a specific upgrade to have any hope of winning a given mission. Again, the key is saving *before* you purchase upgrades.

Small nits, to be sure. *Uprising* is a gem. The ideal audience is clearly the gamer who enjoys both *Quake* and *Command & Conquer*, since it does include facets of each. But the strategic elements are basic enough that any action fan will have an easy time learning them, and once learned, *Uprising* should get under your skin and stay there for a good long while. *–Peter Smith*

★★★★☆

Uprising

3DO • www.3do.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial


COMING SOON!
TRIBAL
RAGE
"BIKER BOOBS MY ASS!"
DALONSOFT
Real-Time Gaming Will Never Be The Same!

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Sick of 3D? Check out the game that lives up to its name

True to its name, *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is an odd gaming experience, even if it's not a particularly new one. Its roots can be traced to 2D puzzle-based platform classics like *Flashback* and *Out of this World*. However, *Oddworld* cuts through today's crowded 3D-only me-too cloning fests like a lighthouse through fog.

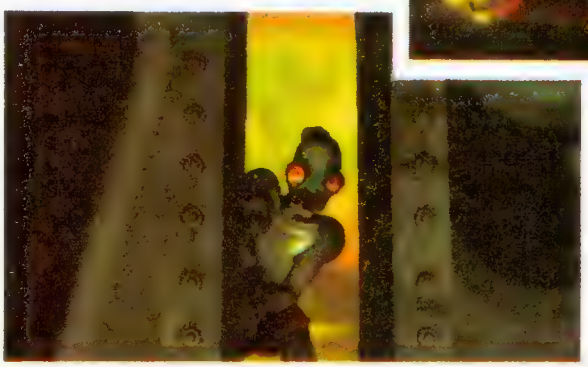
As a member of the Mudokon race of beings, Abe unwittingly discovers a plot by the tyrannical owners of the Rupture Farms meat-processing plant where he is an employee/slave-worker that will make him and his kinfolk the latest thing on the Rupture menu. The game plays out as a really long flashback sequence, giving the player infinite lives. And, more than likely, you'll need them. The environments go through the grim interior of Rupture Farms and foul prisons to the surrounding industrial wastelands, the forest and jungles where Abe's more primitive brethren live. Unlike most games, Abe isn't exactly alone against the Odds. One of *Oddworld*'s most distinguishing characteristics is its conversation mechanism.

[top to bottom]

Guide Abe through a detailed world fraught with danger and adventure

The evil Molluck the Glukkon is the mastermind behind Rupture Farm's latest snack food

Abe finds himself in the wrong place at the right time to discover what's in store for his kind



Abe has a limited vocabulary that he can use to speak to his fellow Mudokons. Indeed, the ultimate goal of the game is not just rescue to himself but all his buddies as well, so proper communication is imperative. Starting off a conversation with the most enduring "Hello" you'll ever hear, Abe can instruct his partner to "Follow Me" and "Wait." In addition, he can also whistle back to his jungle mates, growl, laugh and, of course, fart. In addition to talking, chanting plays a huge role in the game. Abe's chanting opens the escape portals by which his fellow Mudokons can escape, it incites anger in some beasts and actually allows you take control over, and even kill, some monsters. Properly communicating is the key to getting through a large portion of the game, as the other Mudokons are intrinsic elements to many of the puzzles. The problem is that the Mudokons are easily killed if you make the slightest mistake, but then again the same can be said for Abe as well.

Oddworld is an extremely unforgiving game. The "rooms" in the game generally have specific solutions which need to be solved with a particularly rare mixture of logic and action prowess. There's plenty of jumping, rolling, sneaking and evading to be done, and the fact that Abe is so easily killed doesn't make it any easier. Then there's the problem of the game only saving your position in certain locations, which means going over the same ground multiple times if a specific room is causing problems. The lack of a proper save option is made worse by the game's reliance on hidden areas. Just passing through the locations in a linear fashion will likely cause you to miss about half the game – and more importantly, a large portion of the condemned Mudokons. Abe must search high and low for entrances to secret areas, a task fraught with accidental death. In order to see the best ending (or even a favorable one), Abe must rescue the majority of his kin, which makes the game even more challenging than it already is. And yet, it's so well-designed and the characters are so endearing (even the villains), that *Oddworld* keeps you playing despite the ensuing frustration.

Graphically, the 3D rendered landscapes are quite stunning and character animation is top-notch. Unfortunately, the game really deserves a high-resolution overhaul over the PlayStation version to give the creatures and scenery even more definition and sharpness. The sound is excellent all around, especially the voices, and the music effectively accompanies the visual atmosphere. The control scheme is a bit complex, and you'll likely want an eight-button controller for the game.

Those who prefer more traditional adventure games would be well-advised to steer clear of *Oddworld*. While it's definitely not for everyone, it's a thoroughly challenging action-based puzzle game with exceptional design and artistry. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★★★☆

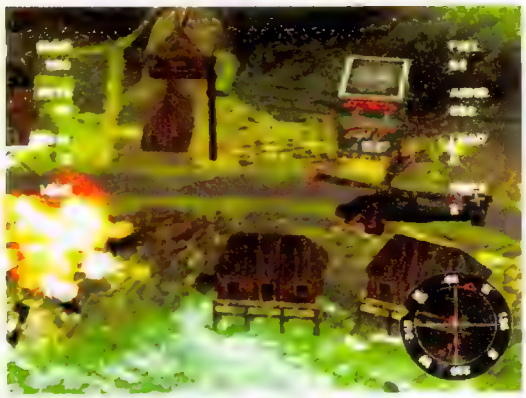
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

GT Interactive • www.gtgames.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 120MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

Nuclear Strike

Let's throw a hip-hoppin, trash talkin' war

A virtual advertisement for the "coolness" of covert war, *Nuclear Strike* is one of the first fascist, jingoistic, hip-hop action games. The story involves the covert STRIKE team and the "war" they engage against terrorists. They take out innumerable civilian structures and kill thousands of faceless minorities in order to keep the world safe from, in this case, a madman with a nuclear capabilities. If it wasn't so silly it would probably be offensive.



{top to bottom}

Take out that fishing village – they're just tools of terrorism

More of the beautifully choreographed carnage

The A-10 handles like the Comanche handles like the tank handles like the hovercraft

Slick videos featuring MTV-style headache-inducing editing introduce each new mission, and clips are interspersed throughout as your directives change. They're skillfully produced – no one's even close to Electronic Arts in the video department.

On the surface, *Nuclear Strike* is a completely brainless action game. Get your mission. Fly around. Shoot things. Move on. However, a few minutes of play will uncover a few more subtleties than expected. The game has some strategy – you can command the battlefield and direct troops from any one of the 15 vehicles you can take command of. There's even a tiny bit of resource management as you'll need to manage your firepower and fuel in order to be guaranteed you'll have enough payload to complete the actual mission goals.

However, the game's focus is on carnage. Lots of carnage. And it delivers. Everything can blow up, causing terrain deformation, scarring and shock waves to ripple across the 3Dfx-accelerated terrain. Tanks get blown into the air, innocent natives get mowed down by random gunfire and trees explode when shot (perhaps they're the legendary Paraguayan methane tree).

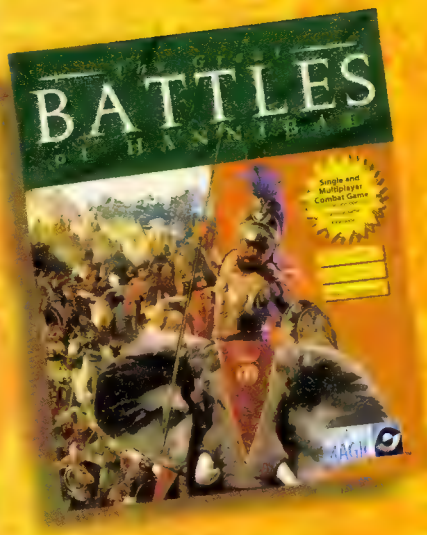
Ultimately, all of this sound and fury adds up to little more than an temporary diversion. *Nuclear Strike* doesn't have much replayability and there's no multiplayer to save the day. Additionally, there's little to no AI to speak of and the performance lags on low-end machines (even with a 3Dfx). However, if you can stomach the tacky premise and are interested in some quick thrills, *Nuclear Strike* delivers. *–Steve Bauman*

★★★½☆

Nuclear Strike

Electronic Arts • www.ea.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 133MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

NOW Available!



rule the world
conquer a nation

also available

www.imagicgames.com

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

visit your local retailer or call
1-800-789-1534
to order a copy today!

Sub Culture

Down under the sea is where I wanna be!

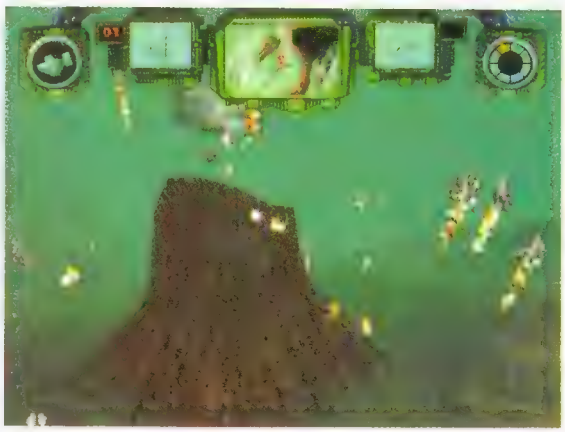
For those of you out there grumbling about the extinction of the single-player game in this age of deathmatching, there are still a few games that give hope to the idea that the single player game is not, in fact, dead. Add UbiSoft's beautiful undersea journey *Sub Culture* to a list that includes Psygnosis' *G Police*, Origin's upcoming *Wing Commander Prophecy*, the *Tomb Raider* series and Blue Byte's *Archimedean Dynasty*. *Sub Culture* is a sort of "*Privateer* meets the little people underwater" kind of game. It places you as tiny homeless guy who carries a sort of "have sub, will travel" mentality. Combat, spying, mining and trading, rescue, fishing and general destruction are all par for the course in this game.

The reason you start the game homeless and scrimping for dirty work to pay the bills is because human garbage has crushed your swell little ocean floor abode. And as if that wasn't bad enough, your name happens to be Bubba Kosh. Bubba finds himself moving between two cold warring undersea factions, the Procha and the Bohine. Then there are the pirates, but no one likes them. There are four major cities in this undersea world (two for each faction), plus several cave systems and a pseudo-religious trading cult that buys your mineral resources. Unlike most games of this sort, *Sub Culture* immerses you in a complete, active environment. Most of your time is spent in the submarine and you can dock where you like and move about at will across the whole landscape.

The game is well balanced between resource gathering and missions. You often need to go scouring the ocean floor for metal objects (usually human flotsam like bottle caps and such) and crystals that allow you to upgrade and repair your sub. Successful missions garner even bigger bucks but often require specific equipment that must be purchased beforehand. Taking missions from each side (or even just visiting their cities) affects your overall standing with each faction, so the more missions you perform for the Prochas improves your standing with them, but makes you extremely unwelcome in Bohine territory. Oddly enough, this doesn't affect your ability to get work with either side as much as you'd think, as both sides will still hire you to perform their dirty work. The game's storyline moves along through e-mail news reports, occasional videos and other cinematic scenes.

Graphically, *Sub Culture* is possibly the most spectacular looking game this year. The game supports Direct 3D and native 3Dfx, Rendition, and Power VR versions, plus an unaccelerated mode, but it's definitely a 3D card showcase. The aquatic environment has beautiful particle physics, bubbles that constantly flow around you, stunning lighting and a myriad of native marine life that both looks great and acts in realistic ways – often curious, scared, or aggressive depending upon what you or something else nearby does. Indeed, when first starting to play, you'll likely forgo missions just to explore the map and see the sights. The audio is up to par as well, with a fantastic soundtrack and superb effects. *Sub Culture* has a wide array of control variations, though the joystick option fails to support basic things like a hat controls and throttles; force feedback, however, is very well done.

The only real flaw in the game is a lack of more randomized missions. Freelance bounties and other "random" money-garnering tasks that lay outside the main mission-tree would have added a lot to the overall game and given it more play life beyond the 30+ missions already present. However, unless you're a deathmatch junkie, *Sub Culture* is well worth getting. It's a beautiful and distinctive journey that is as much fun to watch as it is to play. *–Jason D'Aprile*



[top to bottom]

Carrying a radioactive canister past killer mutant fish to scientists isn't the safest way to make money, but it sure is fun

Attack of the Killer Jellyfish!

There are several cities in Sub Culture to trade with and gain employment from

Plug up that volcano with some well placed depth charges, but be careful not to get fried in the process

★★★★½

Sub Culture

Ubi Soft Entertainment • www.ubisoft.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

Manx TT Super Bike

The beginning of the full-priced demo?

Nice track. Enjoy it while it lasts

Look out *Moto Racer*, *Manx TT* could be the next racing pack-in game of choice for 3Dfx cards. It has all the things card manufacturers look for. It shows off the neat features of the 3DFx hardware (especially when compared to the non-accelerated version), it's a high profile title (straight out of the arcade) and most of all, it caters perfectly to the card company's desire to include demos instead of full versions, even though they know full versions of games have far greater appeal.

Manx TT is all of the above in one slick package. It looks great, plays glass smooth and features a superb 3D engine (superior to *Moto Racer*) with no draw-in. It also comes with a whopping two – yes, two – tracks.

Oh wait, it has reverse track mode as well. Whoopee.

Everything else about the game is top-notch. The control is excellent, sound is good and, like most Sega games, without acceleration enabled it will run pretty poorly on most mid-range systems. On the upside, the video options include an adjustable "draw-in" meter to help with the framerate.

Despite how good *Manx TT* is, it's hard to fathom what Sega was thinking when they released a game so incomplete for the PC market. Or even for a console system (the Saturn version suffers from the same problem). Plugging your seventy-five cents into *Manx* in the arcade to have a quick romp through these tracks – and they are pretty good – is great, but paying full price to get those identical tracks on your PC seems a highly unlikely scenario for all but the most diehard fans of the coin-op version. And, well, those people probably already have a Saturn anyway. Whatever qualities the game may possess take a back seat when you're finally struck with the realization that you just paid for a game that's barely more than a demo for a really cool game that we'll probably never see. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★☆☆☆

Manx TT Super Bike

Sega Entertainment • www.sega.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial

NOW Available!

We're sending you in just in case we're next

www.imagicgames.com

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

visit your local retailer or call
1-800-789-1534
to order a copy today!

WIN! The Ultimate Gaming Rig!!

OVER $20,000.00 IN PRIZES!

PANDEMONIUM

Now everyone who plays wins a free six month magazine subscription!! You can't lose!

You have the POWER. In this contest you don't rely on the luck-of-the draw. You determine if you win or not. You win by outscoring others in a game of skill. Can you solve the puzzle below? Then you have what it takes. It looks simple, but it's only the start. Each of five more puzzles get a little harder. But this time it's all up to you. Stay in to the end with the highest score and the gear is yours. With whatever options you want. Do you have what it takes? Then play to win!

Computer Contest. Win a blazing fast computer with 300 Mhz MMX Pentium II, 32 meg. RAM, 4 Gig. HD, 24X CD-ROM, Windows 95, modem and more!

Video Game Contest. Play on the hi-tech cutting edge with this line-up: Sony Playstation w/ ASCII control pads; Sega Saturn; Game Boy Pocket; and Nintendo 64! Get all four or trade the ones you don't want for CA$H! Bonus options include: 33 inch monitor, $1,000 in games, cash, accessories and more!

Media Rig Contest. The Ultimate Gaming Environment, 60 inch monitor, 130 watt receiver w/ Dolby Digital Surround Sound, and all components shown. Win DSS Satellite Receiver as a BONUS OPTION! This rig will blow you away!!

We're talkin' GAMING HEAVEN!

Directions. Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with words going across that spell out the Mystery Word down the side. Hint: use the Mystery Word Clue.

In the future. There will be four more puzzles at $2.00 each and one tie-breaker at $1.00 which will be sent to you by mail. You will have 3 weeks to solve each puzzle. We don't know how many will play but typically 55% will have the highest score possible score to Phase I, 43% to Phase II, 36% to Phase III, and 32% to Phase IV. The tie-breaker determines the winner. If players are still tied they will split the value of the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid

	H				___
		E			___
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				___
S					___

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS.....E	DREAM ....O
CRUSH.....I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:
WORLD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

ENTER ME TODAY, HERE'S MY ENTRY FEE:

- ☐ ($3.00) Video Game Contest
- ☐ ($3.00) Media Rig Contest
- ☐ ($3.00) Computer Contest
- ☐ ($5.00) SPECIAL! Enter them all (SAVE $4.00)

CLIP AND MAIL

Name _____ **Age** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
PANDEMONIUM, P.O. BOX 9045
GRESHAM, OR 97030-9045

VOID WHERE PROHIBITED • ENTRY DEADLINE: POSTMARKED BY FEB.21ST, 1998 • ENTRY FEE MUST BE INCLUDED
Only one entry per person. You must be under 30 years old to win. Employees of Pandemonium and its suppliers are ineligible. Judges decisions are final. Not responsible for lost or delayed mail. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada. Offer not open to residents of Minnesota. You can request Winners List and Official Rules by writing Pandemonium Rules, 2870 NE Hogan Dr. #E425, Gresham OR 97030. Merchandise names and models are trademarks of their respective companies who, along with this magazine, have no affiliation with this contest. © 1998 Pandemonium Promotions, Inc.

Daytona USA Deluxe

Racing without 3D card support

[top to bottom]

Sega tries to bring the arcade feel to your desktop, again

Uh, are those pixels we see here? Where's the 3D acceleration to smooth those out? Aaarrrgghh

In the arcade, Sega is almost the undisputed king of racing. However, this is not the case on the PC. *Daytona USA* was released a while back, and while was a decent port over of the coin-op classic, the game was outclassed by the competition. The latest *Daytona*, keenly called *Daytona USA Deluxe*, is basically a revamp of the older title, containing six tracks (including all the old ones and one new track) and, more notably, better controller and multiplayer support.

The tracks in the game are pretty good, but undermined by performance of the graphics engine. Visual glitches abound in this game. The road disappears in a flash of blue, the background suffers from noticeable draw-in, making the horizon suddenly appear before you in an annoying fashion, and on one track you'll see boats floating in mid-air because Sega apparently decided there was no need to finish the background in that particular area. Thankfully, *Daytona Deluxe* supports both hi- and low-resolution graphics in 8- and 16-bit color modes, so most systems will be able to get the game to run decently. The soundtrack is a bit less annoying than previous Sega racers, and the sound effects are decent as well.

The controls are very good, and if you're a fan of Sega racers, this is an enjoyable enough racing romp. Sega claims the game was "built from the ground up" to support force-feedback; however, the implementation is thoroughly underwhelming – the only effect it uses is moderate impact bumping. Also included is a two-player split screen mode and eight-player network play through TCP/IP and IPX, in addition to serial and modem connections. The game is due to get a D3D patch at some point (hopefully by the time you read this), which should improve the game's performance significantly.

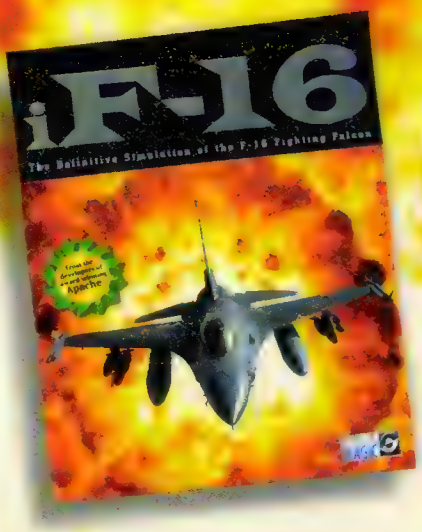
Overall if it's *Daytona* that you want on your PC, this is worthwhile. However, if you're simply after a solid arcade style racer for the PC, look elsewhere. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★½☆☆

Daytona USA Deluxe

Sega Entertainment • www.sega.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial, split screen

NOW Available!



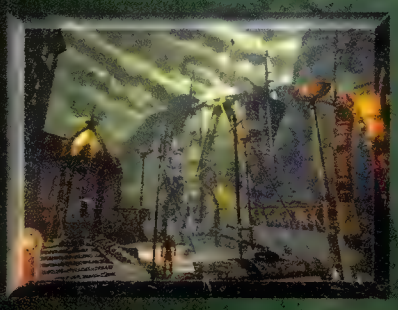
experience Nine G's at your desk!

www.imagicgames.com

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

visit your local retailer or call 1-800-789-1534 to order a copy today!

Out of the depths of darkness...



The Critics Have Found The Light.

"A fantastic adventure...rich and rewarding...one of the most engrossing PC gaming experiences in a long time." "A Rating" — PC Games

"Games don't get much more absorbing than Dark Earth*...adventure gamers definitely should experience it."* ★★★★
— Computer Games Strategy Plus

"...lavishly detailed and exquisitely conceived... Dark Earth's *detailed graphical touches are sure to impress."* — boot

comes the next generation of real-time adventure games.

You are your own worst enemy in the moody world of *Dark Earth*. Here, it's your mission to restore the one thing that can save all of humanity–light.

In your travels, you'll uncover dark murder plots through real-time adventure and engage in combat as you interact with sinister and bizarre characters. In fact, everyone will prey upon you as you ponder your next move. But, there is a ray of hope–you simply have to find it.

- Complete freedom of movement within a visually stunning world
- Over 100 3-D animated characters with real-time behavior
- Easy-to-use controls for movement and combat
- Adjustable mood affects outcome of encounters with other characters

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

Available on Windows 95. Visit your local retailer or call 1-800-695-GAME day or night (U.S. or Canada).

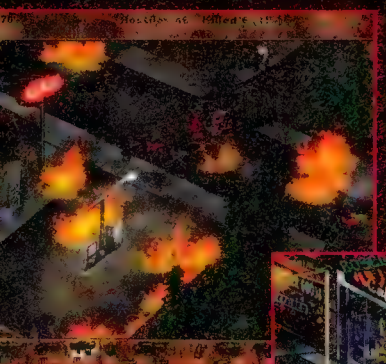
"POSTAL IS ONE SICK PUPPY, AND I KINDA LIKE IT."
GamePlayer.com

"IT'S BLOODIER THAN MONOLITH'S BLOOD™ AND MORE EXPLOSIVE THAN ID'S QUAKE™!"
PC Multimedia & Entertainment Magazine

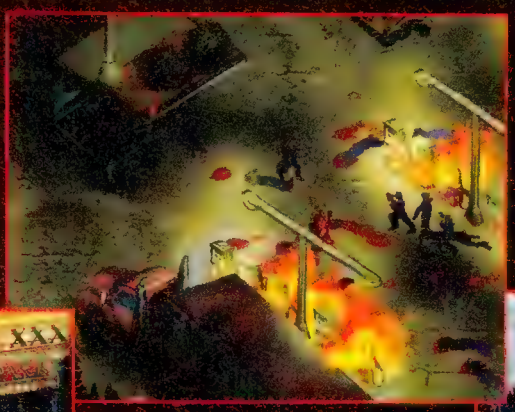
"ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL GAME EDITORS WE'VE EVER SEEN IN AN ACTION GAME"
Computer Gaming World

"POSTAL IS ONE OF THE MOST OUTRAGEOUSLY FUNNY TITLES I'VE EVER SEEN! IN ADDITION TO THE GREAT GAME PLAY, THE TECHNICAL AND ARTISTIC FEATURES OF THIS GAME ARE EXCEPTIONAL."
AnyGame.com

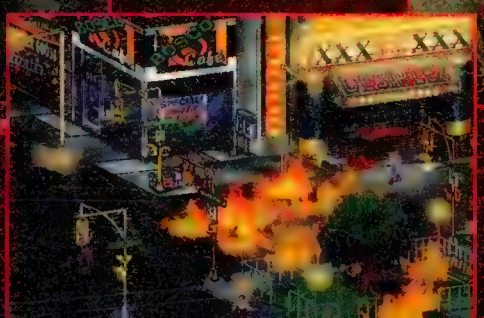
"SURE, SENSELESS VIOLENCE IS FUN. BUT IT'S EVEN MORE FUN WHEN IT'S DIRECTED AT MARCHING BANDS"
Computer & Net Player Magazine



• Brutal shoulder/melee combo challenges you to keep one eye on your target and the other looking over your shoulder at all times.



• So freakin' real, your victims will actually beg for mercy and scream for their lives.



• Real-time 3D characters rage against beautifully hand-painted 2D killing fields.

©1997 Running With Scissors, Inc. Postal is a trademark of Running With Scissors, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Other trademarks are property of their respective companies.

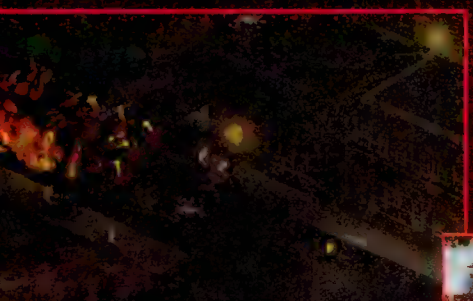
"ANTISOCIAL. PSYCHOTIC. AROUND COMPLETELY IRRESISTIBLE."
PC Games

"HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF? P-O-S-T-A-L."
Kick Action

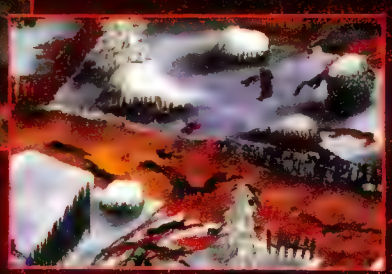
"THE SHOCK VALUE MIGHT GET YOU STARTED ON POSTAL, BUT IT'S THE GAMEPLAY THAT WILL KEEP YOU COMING BACK."
Gamepen

"THE GAME'S SOUND EFFECTS...ARE NUMEROUS AND ENTERTAINING..."
Gamesmania

"POSTAL HAS REDEFINED WHAT ACTION GAMING IS ALL ABOUT. AND YOU'LL BE HEARING A LOT ABOUT THIS ONE FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. REVIEW SCORE: 10 OUT OF 10"
Winner of the Editor's Choice Award
EnterMedia.Net



• Ross murder opportunities: survey scotesters, mow down marching bands and charbroil whole towns.



• Multi-player network play over modem, LAN or the Internet – so you can go Postal with other death row conditions.

Available now for PC and Mac

Get them first at your local retailer, www.ripcordgames.com, or by calling 1•888•797•5867 and give them the code: **"Lethal Injection."**

MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

WINDOWS 95/98 SCISSORS

FREE INTERNET GAME PLAY PLAYER www.mplayer.com

COMPETE ON HEAT HEAT.NET

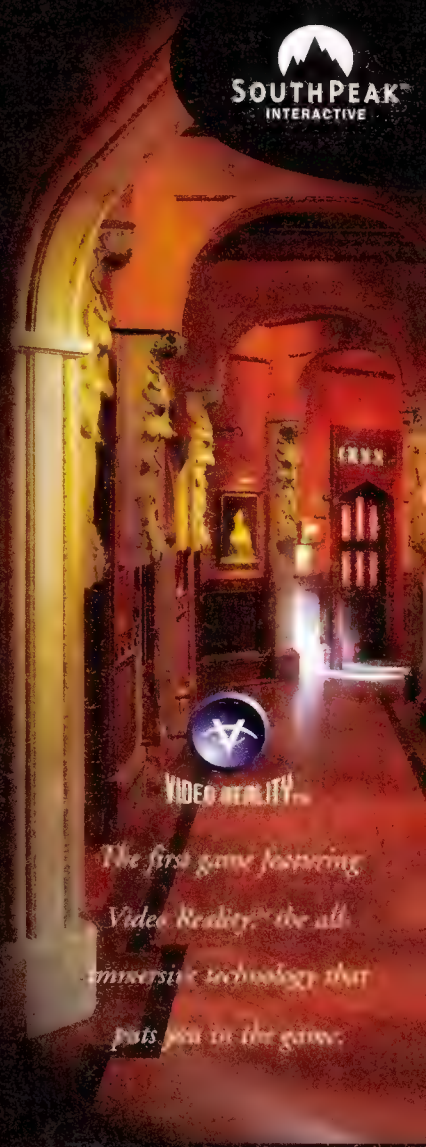
ripcord GAMES

SOUTHPEAK INTERACTIVE

ANCIENT TREASURES.

AN AGE-OLD MYSTERY.

THE ONLY THING MISSING IS YOUR SOUL.



TEEN

Temüjin, SouthPeak, and the SouthPeak logo are trademarks of SouthPeak Interactive L.L.C.
Video Reality and the Video Reality logo are trademarks of SAS Institute Inc., Used Under License.

WWW.SOUTHPEAK.COM

TEMÜJIN

A SUPERNATURAL ADVENTURE™

Road to Nowhere

Organic and inorganic chemistry

Whenever adventure game developers discuss puzzle design, one buzzword appears again and again. So many agree that, in his or her regime at least, the puzzles should be "organic." Organic, in the strictest sense of the word, means: of, relating to, or affecting an organ of the body. This would, of course, justify the epic spleen hunt, the sliding kidney puzzle, or the maze of small intestines all alike.

It's interesting that no one has chosen to model a game after the 1966 classic (?!) *The Fantastic Voyage*, where a group of doctors and scientists (including Raquel Welch), along with their high-tech submarine, are microminiaturized and injected into the bloodstream of an ailing diplomat in order to perform microsurgery to save his life. With Welch clad in the scrub-suit that won the Most-Plummeting-Neckline award in the annual Exhibit of Medical Fashions, they sail through

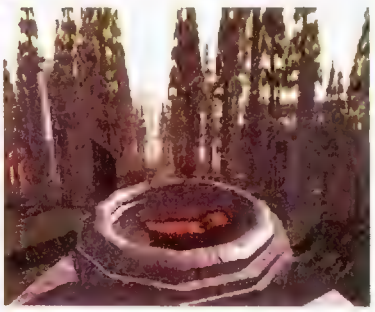
[clockwise from above]

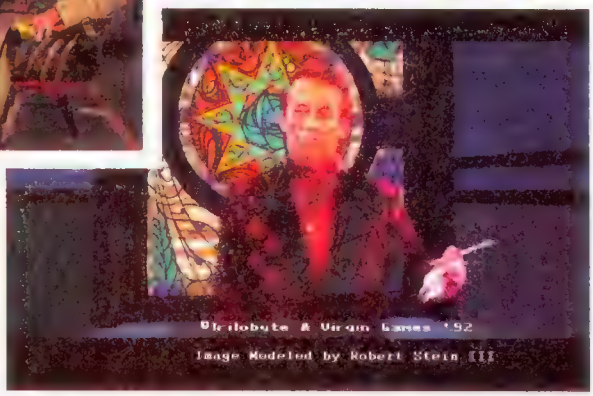
From Zork Grand Inquisitor, one of the few places you actually do break down the door

Myst's pillar-lined walkway through inorganic activities of the third kind

Standalone puzzle solutions are rewarded by dramatic interludes in The 7th Guest

Tex Murphy is grounded in Pandora's Fuchsia Flamingo





plasma, realize that a saboteur is among them, become misdirected, and are eventually almost devoured by white corpuscles. After diverting their course, they manage to escape through a conveniently located lachrymal duct. Gee, I guess it *is* a classic. And what could be more organic that this?

Scooting down in the list of definitions for "organic," however, brings us to the one to which the designers are actually referring, which is "integral"– essential for completeness. In games that are more about the story than anything else, designers (especially those that are as much writers as game developers) want puzzles that *complete* actions and events – not ones that stand apart from them. If working out a puzzle advances the story in some way, it stands to reason that the puzzle "belongs there," but the activity required to solve it can run the gamut from yes-I-can-really-see-myself-doing-that to how-absurd-is-*this*?

The extent to which puzzles are organic runs the gamut from Not At All (i.e. *7th Guest*, and *Myst* and its clones where puzzles are generally completely separate from the story), to Highly Integral (i.e. *The Pandora Directive*, *The Beast Within*, and others where narrative and puzzles are symbiotic).

Any designer will agree that puzzle-connectivity is not easy to come by. Puzzles are contrived. They *have* to be. They're puzzles. Probably the most "organic" puzzle *type* of all, and one that exists in almost every adventure, is the very technical, strategic and highly complicated getting-through-the-locked-door puzzle. *Phantasmagoria* and *Zork Grand Inquisitor* have us using the old slide the paper under the door to catch the falling key on the wrong side of the door solution. *Shivers 2*, *The Neverhood* and *Atlantis* have us solving mysterious sliding tile puzzles that inexplicably spring the lock. What we *don't* see a lot of is…JUST BASH DOWN THE %&$* DOOR! Now *that* would be organic.

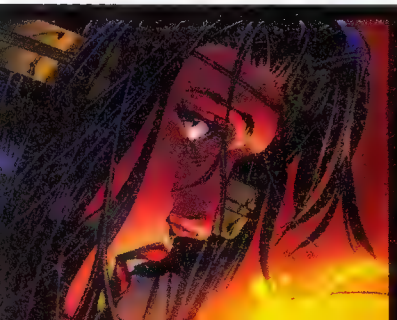
I think the whole non-organic thing is overrated. Non-organic is just *fine* with me, as long as non-*intuitive* doesn't happen. Possibly the best adventure puzzle ever crafted requires you to obtain a small fish from a dispenser and stick it firmly in your ear. *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*'s babel fish puzzle is burned irrevocably into the memory of anyone who has solved it. It is a multiple step puzzle during which, the moment you *think* you've solved it, another obstacle is introduced. Every time you press the button on the dispenser, a little babel fish goes flying through a hole and is lost. Solve this and the fish bounces off the cleverly concealed hole and down the drain. Solve this and the fish bounces off the cleverly concealed hole, slides across the towel covering the drain, and gets promptly vacuumed up by a cleaning robot that scoots through its door. Block its door with your briefcase and the fish bounces off the cleverly concealed hole, slides across the towel covering the drain, and gets promptly vacuumed up by a top-of-the-room cleaning robot. Solve this and the fish bounces off the cleverly concealed hole, slides across the towel covering the drain. Now, the top-of-the room cleaning robot is thwarted as the pile of mail you put on your briefcase (which is covering the bottom-of-the-room cleaning robot's doorway) flies all over and distracts it. The fish nestles happily in your ear. Non-organic, sure…but progressively intuitive. Now *that's* puzzle design. –*Cindy Yans*

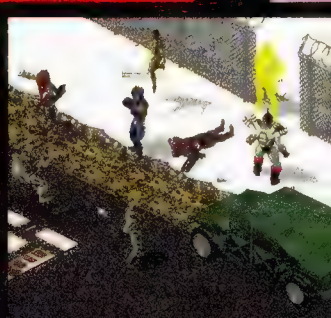
We took a perfectly good strategy game and threw in a few curves.

Go ahead and stare. You've never seen anything like *Guardians: Agents of Justice*™. Never before has a game so expertly mixed resource management and intense superheroic battle. Never before has the army in a strategy game been a handful of mutant, superbuff enforcers out to save tomorrow's planet from its own scum. And never before have there been such shapely superheroes, as easy on the eyes as they are rough on the rib cage. *Guardians: Agents of Justice* is the superhero strategy game where you call the shots. You can even customize your own mighty saviors, in case ours fail to meet your needs. (Somehow, we doubt it.)

GUARDIANS™
AGENTS OF JUSTICE™

• A SUPERHEROIC STRATEGY GAME •





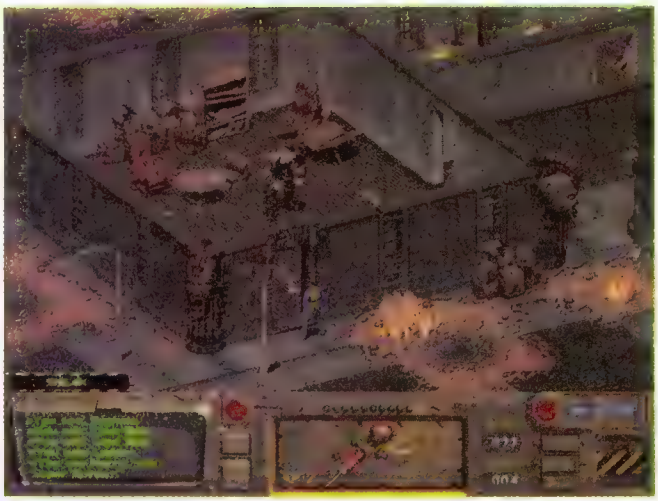
MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

© 1998 MicroProse, Inc. All rights reserved. Guardians: Agents of Justice is a trademark of MicroProse, Inc.

Grue's Lair

Foiling the follies of Fallout

If you noticed something missing from this month's *Computer Games Strategy Plus*, go ahead and give yourself an extra five points for being observant – Unca Andy has stepped down from his podium and moved on to newer and happier assignments. Stepping in to fill his boots (ahem) is *Grue's Lair* – a column dedicated to catering to that insatiable addiction to bewildering puzzles and muddling mazes. Here you will find an assortment of tips and pointers for your favorite adventure and role-playing games and possibly a few extra goodies as well. These are not the kinds of hints you would find in other strategy guides, and we strongly recommend limiting your dosage. Once a month should do.



[right] Harry will try to take you to see someone he calls "Lou"– do not go with him

[below] Some of the Brahmin you may encounter in the desert are more articulate than most

Fallout: Nit-picks in Necropolis

It seems that everyone has a suggestion for what to do to survive the harsh world of *Fallout*, but what would really be handy in the dark streets of Necropolis is a suggestion for what *not* to do. In your quest to repair the ghouls' broken water pump, you will come to a building inhabited by a bevy of super-mutants. Their leader, the somewhat-less-than-savvy Harry, stands in the foyer of the building and will speak to you if approached.

Feel free to talk to Harry all you want, but if he offers to take you to his commander (a mutant he refers to as "Lou"), make sure you refuse to comply. The trip to see "Lou" is something of a dead end, and it is extremely unlikely that you will be able to continue the story along that path. Returning to your last save game should not be a problem, but what happens to you during your conversation with "Lou" is. If prompted he will happily fill you in on most of the back-story of the game, ruining what would otherwise be a perfectly good mystery. If you appreciate a well-paced plot with a few surprises, you might want to skip this encounter.

Wandering the wasteland

If you have a particularly high Luck, you may run into some special encounters in the desert. These are good for a few laughs, but you can often come away with some interesting equipment as well….

Somewhere in the desert is Bob's Used Cars – a dusty lot filled with derelict autos and run by the slightly delusional Bob. The autos are worthless, but make sure you explore the dealership building before you go… particularly the crates in the northwest corner of said structure. Be careful with what you find there – you might put your eye out!

You are not as far from New Mexico as you might think, and it is possible that you will come across an artifact from the little town of Roswell. The encounter is useful as well as amusing – make sure to search the bodies of the aliens before you leave.

Anyone who has seen the short animated film *Bambi vs. Godzilla* will be amused when they find the latter creature's giant footprint in the sand. Bambi is not likely to be too talkative, but he is carrying some equipment that was obviously not turned on when he met his doom. It would be a pity to let it go to waste….

What on earth would a British police box be doing in the middle of the Californian desert? Bearing some quirky Time Lord who has come to have a closer look at the ravaged remains of Earth, no doubt. Do not expect Tom Baker to step out and speak to you in person, but search the ground carefully once the TARDIS has disappeared – he may have left you a gift.

Gamma-wave goodies

It would be a shame if the ultra-high-resolution screen of your PIP-Boy were to be damaged. Fortunately, it comes with its own screensaver – just open it and leave it alone for a few minutes to get it going. If you find the motif soothing, search the *Fallout* CD in the /Program/Goodies folder and you will find a Windows 95 version of the screensaver that you can use on your own computer.

The folder also contains an early test-version of the game's engine. To get it working properly, you will need to copy both the main.exe file and the dos4gw.exe file (found in the /Program/Dos folder on the Fallout CD) onto your hard drive. It is not really a game in and of itself, but it can be somewhat amusing to play with (depending on how easy you are to amuse).

Until next time, keep the Rad-Ex handy and always remember to save early, save often. *–Benjamin E. Sones*

If only Bambi had been using his Stealth-Boy when Godzilla came along…

WHERE OTHER
STRATEGY GAMES
LEFT OFF...
"Moo"
"Moo II"

CONQUER THE LARGEST GAME ENVIRONMENT EVER
CONTROL THE UNIVERSE, THE SIZE OF THE GALAXY, THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF THE PLANETS, TERRAIN TYPES, LIFEFORMS AND WEATHER CONDITIONS
YOU ARE HERE
SIMULTANEOUS LAND AND SPACE COMBAT – A FIRST IN ANY STRATEGY GAME
SCAN
MOTHER SHIPS CARRY COLONISTS, RESOURCES
INDIGENOUS LIFEFORMS THAT PESTER AND ROB RESOURCES
A.I. BEGINS.
Interplay
BY GAMERS, FOR GAMERS
www.interplay.com
1-800-INTERPLAY
FLASHLINE
COMPATIBLE Windows 95
RATING PENDING RP

Manage, build and defend the largest playing field in the universe comprised of three different arenas–land, space and intergalactic–all at once!

Think you're up to it? Can you repopulate your annihilated race, research the technologies, explore multiple universes, and defend your space colony from marauding alien races – on land and space simultaneously?

It's never been done before. And with a playing field this enormous, you could be trying till the cows come home.

A.I.

ALIEN INTELLIGENCE™

©1997 Flatline Studios, LLC. All Rights Reserved. [Portions ©1997 Interplay Productions. All Rights Reserved.] A.I. Alien Intelligence, Interplay, the Interplay logo, and "By Gamers. For Gamers." are trademarks of Interplay Productions. Flatline Studios and the Flatline Studios logo are trademarks of Flatline Studios, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Licensed and distributed exclusively by Interplay Productions.

The Curse of Monkey Island

Threepwood returns to Big Whoop, adding insult to hilarity

To a lot of adventure gamers, the first two *Monkey Island* games were works of art with a flair that, in their day, simply defined the genre. PS: they still are. They are clever, very funny, and have (still!) some of the most interesting puzzles in any graphic adventure, past or present. The hero, Guybrush Threepwood (obviously at the end of the line when they were handing out names), is the most unlikely pirate candidate ever to trip over the Seven Seas. He sprang from the loins of Ron Gilbert (well, maybe not *directly* from his loins) in 1990's *The Secret of Monkey Island*. In 1993, *Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge* built upon the success of the first game, offering two difficulty levels, a slightly improved SCUMM™ interface and equal or greater player satisfaction.

When Ron (sniffle) Gilbert left LucasArts (sniffle) to fry tastier fish, fans of the series feared they would never again adventure with the beloved but wimpy little hero. But no. LucasArts knew better than that. Designers Jonathan Ackley and Larry Ahern, longtime proponents of Gilbert and the original *Monkey Island* games, were confident that they would be able to create the sequel that would live up to the series' reputation. As it turns out, they were able to. They pulled out all the stops and *The Curse of Monkey Island* is a wonderful adventure for all ages, not to be missed by lovers of the series, newcomers or adventurers of any ability.

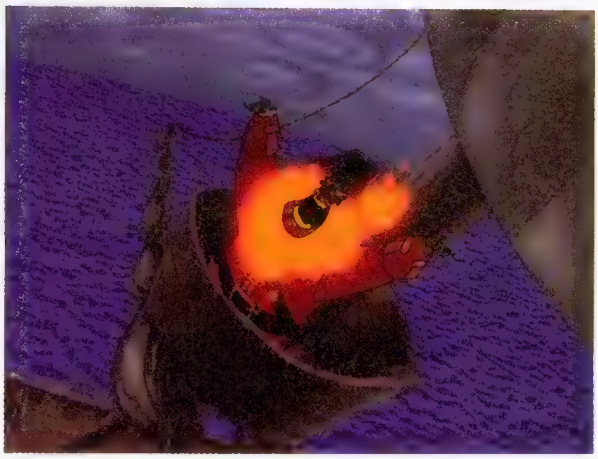
As the game opens, Guybrush is milling about in an renegade bumper car, in which one can only imagine that he must have spent the entire latter part of his adolescence. With Big Whoop a memory, and a lonely future looming ahead, the little fellow seems destined to bump forever. Suddenly, he is whisked into a story where the most-likely-to-be-squeezed Elaine Marley (the love of his life) returns. After he proposes to her, he offers a suspect ring that turns her into solid gold. So there she is, all tall and stiff (which, after all, should have been *his* job), when the huge green pirate LeChuck (now a fire-bearded demon), kidnaps her. As in the previous titles, Guybrush must defeat LeChuck, preventing him from taking Elaine as his bride.

When asked about casting choices for the voice actors, even before recording had taken place, Ahern and Ackley said simply, "Dominic Armato *is* Guybrush Threepwood." (Imagine it in one of those deep, commanding announcer voices…like "Arnold Schwarzenegger *is* The Terminator," or "Fran Drescher *is* The Nanny.") As it turns out, Dominic Armato *is* Guybrush Threepwood – definitively. His performance is delightful throughout, wry, dry and witty, with brilliant delivery of afterthoughts and asides. Of course the great script doesn't hurt.

Alexandra Boyd as Elaine Marley is wonderful, but, as she spends most of the game as a mute gold statue, you'll end up wanting more of her…as does Guybrush…and LeChuck. Voiced by Earl Boen, LeChuck is overbearing, brilliant, evil-personified, and his delivery, like his voice, is fittingly larger than life.

Just about all of the lesser characters are equally good (an amazing feat, really, considering some of the downright embarrassing performances we see (and forgive!) in multimedia gaming these days). Of particular note are Murray ("I am Murray, the all-powerful, demonic skull!") from whom we'll probably hear again should another sequel occur; Haggis McMutton (voiced by Alan Young AKA Wilbur of *Mr. Ed* fame, for you old-timers); The Voodoo Lady, and Dinghy Dog™.

No techno-boom here… Presented on two CDs in high-resolution 2-D 640X480 256 colors, the only real technology highlight is the art generator that processes hand generated scanned work and produces completely anti-aliased output that looks like an animated film. Absolutely stunning backgrounds provide very whimsical settings for the quirky and outrageous characters. Just looking at them will make you smile. Guybrush may remind you of one of several animated adaptations of young Ichabod Crane, tall, lanky and pony-tailed, with a long face and prominent proboscis. Little Wally from *Monkey Island 2* is back as



The chicken leg serves as a somewhat mushy gavel for LeChuck

An angrier door has yet to be found

LeChuck declares himself Lord of all he surveys

Bloodnose, a fearsome (?) pirate, about half the size of Guybrush, with a fake, ill-fitting beard. Stan, the used-ship/coffin salesman (the favorite character of many a fan) is back, gesticulating wildly like a displaced outpatient on too many amphetamines. And on a theater balcony, an immense, hideously ugly bearded pirate is just a vision in pink, sporting a fluffy tutu as an awfully twisted-looking Juliet (actually he's a more of a spokesmodel than an actress). We may not have seen something this scary since *Toonstruck*'s butt-bowling scene.

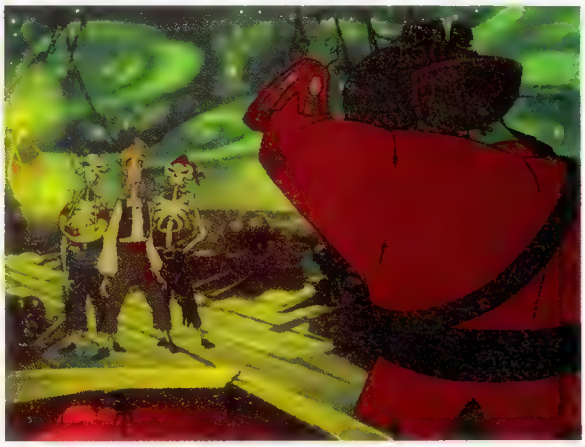
The music integrates really well with the story, never becoming annoying, always enhancing the mood. It consists of a main theme which is a throwback to the original *Monkey Island* theme, with countless variations each appropriate to its situation.

Ackley and Ahern, along with programmers Chuck Jordan and Chris Purvis, have packed this game so full of humor that, unless you play extremely slowly and thoroughly, you are bound to miss some of it. In fact, you're bound to miss some anyway due to quite a bit of esoteric reference…but you'll never find yourself saying, "uh…I don't get it…" If you don't get it, that's OK. It'll be transparent and painless, and there is so much here that you *will* get. A *Star Wars* quip with a beach Cabana boy, *Myst* scorn from The Flying Welshman, a LucasArts mug in the belly of a snake and the widespread fear of El Pollo Diablo, Devil Chicken <mariachi music here>. While you will probably not laugh aloud at all that much, you will undoubtedly appreciate the broad, sweeping sense of humor that permeates the title.

Van Gogh had nothing on the evening sky motif seen here

Elaine is quite volatile when she's not a gold statue

"At least the guy on my right has a rubber ducky disguise"



Obviously, much of the humor arises from the dialog, and it is here that we see one of the few downsides to the game. There is simply too much dialogue proportional to the length of the game. Over 8,000 lines of dialogue, all of which you will *feel* compelled to choose and listen to lest you miss a clue (although in reality you don't have to) – this is the source of the only tedium you'll find in the game. Actually, it's a small price to pay since so much of it is brilliant and genuinely funny. And so much is…well, who *wouldn't* choose to insult someone with, "You big old bed-wetting doody head!"?

The easy to use interface (a là *Full Throttle*) makes puzzle solving a snap. Well, sometimes. You will be able to choose from two difficulty levels, wimp…er, Regular, or the dreaded Mega Monkey. The Mega Monkey mode eliminates quite a few of the "give item to character" types of puzzles, adding a number of additional steps to achieve the goal. This type of thing was very popular in the last game, and works just as well here. Puzzles are absurd in many cases, but not completely unintuitive. Or if they are, they are funny enough to make up for it – carving a giant full-head tribal mask out of an immense hunk of extra-firm tofu, for instance. No matter how carefully carved, the result looks like a big, goofy Casper-the-Friendly-Ghost head. It does the trick, though. There is also a reprise of the classic insult-duel puzzle from the first game. It hasn't lost its charm.

The game is episodic like its predecessors, and although this structure is decidedly linear, the activities during each episode do not seem linear. There is so much to do and see that you are rarely stuck wandering around with nothing at all happening.

In essence, what adds real finesse to *Curse of Monkey Island* is that no one element screams above the rest for recognition. It possesses that "unity of style" across the board for which everyone strives but so few achieve. Even Ron Gilbert, (heck, *especially* Ron Gilbert) should be proud. This is an absolute must for all adventure gamers. Other than its being a bit wordy at times, the only other criticism one can level is that it is probably a tad too short. Leaving us wanting more, however, is what will make us clamor for another sequel. We are told, after all, that "the monkeys are watching…." So should we. *–Cindy Yans*

★★★★½

The Curse of Monkey Island

LucasArts• www.lucasarts.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90Mhz Pentium or higher, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

ORIGINAL SERIES. SIX NEW
From the creators of Star Trek™ Starfleet Academy,™ Star Trek
ACTUAL CHARACTERS AS THEY APPEAR IN THE GAME
STAR TREK™
SECRET OF VULCAN FURY™
COMING THIS SPRING

FOR GAMERS.™

Interplay

INTERACTIVE EPISODES. ALL DIGITAL.

Judgment Rites, and Star Trek 25th Anniversary, comes the amazing digital adventure based on the original series.

"Bottom line, Secret of Vulcan Fury is set to become the ultimate Star Trek game ever."

-Adrenaline Vault

"Interplay's attention to graphic detail has resulted in a stunningly lifelike synthetic revival of the classic Star Trek players."

-PC Gamer

ACTUAL GAME PLAY SCREENSHOTS

Incredible digital technology recaptures the characters as they appeared 30 years ago

Explosive New Story Written By D.C. Fontana

Uncover The Shocking Secrets Behind The Original Vulcan/Romulan Conflict

A "One-Click" Interface Offers Immersive, Fast-Paced Action

RATING PENDING RP ESRB

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

Interplay BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS. WWW.INTERPLAY.COM

Total Dreams

Paramount

STAR TREK: SECRET OF VULCAN FURY: Software ©1997 Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. Trademark and ©1997 Paramount Pictures. All rights reserved. Star Trek, and related marks are the property of Paramount Pictures. All rights reserved. All other copyrights and trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Blade Runner

Do gamers dream of electric sheep?

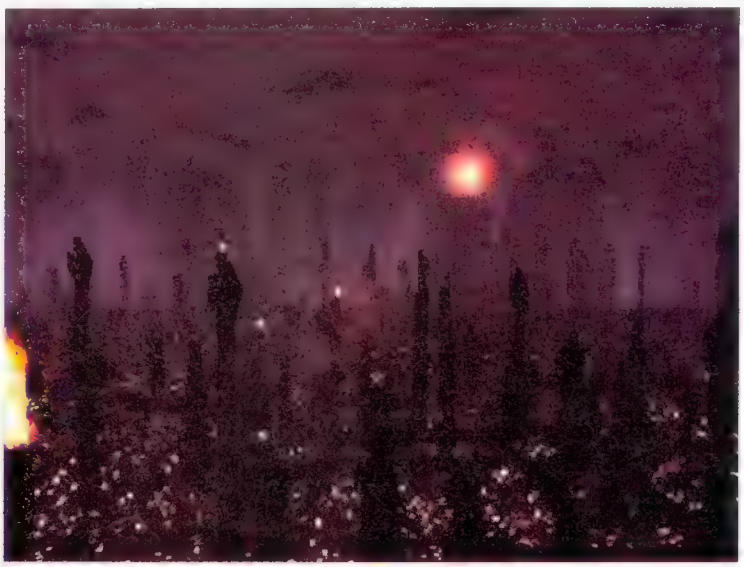
It is often possible to gauge just how terrible a game will be by the number of buzzwords its developers have lavished upon it. A popular movie license is often the last nail in the coffin, suggesting to gamers that the designers lacked even the minimal level of creativity required to come up with a concept of their own. As such, it is not surprising that when a new game promises a "dynamic, 3D real-time adventure based on the hit movie," the first reaction by most gamers is one of foreboding rather than excitement.

Blade Runner has received more than its fair share of hype, an element that often serves to polarize opinions. In this instance the reality lies somewhere in between – the game is not perfect, but it does deliver on many of its promises, and the resulting experience is a very enjoyable one, despite its occasional failings.

Like the 1982 cult classic movie, the game is set in a dark version of Los Angeles, circa 2019. Humanity has expanded into space, but earth itself has been ravaged by a legacy of pollution and war. Central to the theme of the story are the Replicants – artificial constructs created by the genetic engineers of the Tyrell Corporation. They appear human, but are endowed with superior strength and agility and are used as off-world slave labor. As a result of a bloody mutiny, Replicants were declared illegal on Earth under penalty of death. Enforcement of this law is the domain of the police Blade Runner units – officers trained to track and kill trespassing Replicants. The player enacts the role of one such Blade Runner, a newcomer to the force named Ray McCoy. When a grisly animal murder occurs at Runciter's pet shop (real animals are rare and protected by law), Ray is sent to investigate a possible Replicant connection. What follows is a dark and tangled web of corruption, deception, and revelation… suffice it to say that the animal murder is the least of Ray's problems.

The story itself is made even more interesting by its dynamic nature. While most adventure games consist of a linear series of obstacles which must be overcome to advance the story, *Blade Runner* focuses on creating situations within a continuous environment and allows the player to deal with them on his or her own terms. Other characters move between different scenes on their own agendas, and while some of their movements and appearances are scripted, a surprising number of them are not. Even so, gameplay is not a race, and the player triggers many of the key events within the story. In that respect, the game's real-time element probably does not quite match the common definition of the term, but the feeling that at least some part of the game's events and characters carry on even when you are not present is wonderfully immersive.

How the player reacts to these events and other characters is equally non-linear. When questioning a suspected Replicant, the player can be either ruthless or sympathetic, and there is even the possibility of developing a love interest with several characters in the game. The choices the player makes have a serious impact on the story, which features not only a number of different endings but also a variety of twisting paths to reach those endings. Many events and choices are optional, and it is possible for the player to finish the game without meeting every character or visiting all of the game's locations. To take things one level further, the game randomizes which characters are actually Replicants at the start of each game, and conclusions the player has drawn in previous sessions will not necessarily be helpful in determining who to "retire" this time around. While *Blade Runner* still falls short of the replayability of games in other genres (strategy games, for instance), it is heads and shoulders beyond other adventure games in that respect, and most gamers will want to play it at least twice.



[top to bottom]

The Los Angeles of 2019 looks pretty much the way it does today…

Lucy may or may not be a Replicant – any resemblance to Darryl Hannah is purely coincidental

The story begins with a nasty case of animal murder at Runciter's

While the non-linear interaction with other characters is refreshing, the conversation engine itself is somewhat frustrating. The player can opt to set

McCoy to one of four default conversation modes that will automatically make him act in a certain way when speaking to other characters. Conversations are non-interactive when these presets are used – the player simply sits back and watches as McCoy acts out the mode to which he was set. A fifth option allows the player to make the decision whenever a branch is reached in the conversation tree, and this mode of play is much more likely to appeal to veteran adventure gamers. The problem with this approach is that the conversation options are presented in the form of one- or two-word descriptions, and the results of choosing a given option are not always what the player might expect. It is pretty obvious that clicking on a conversation option labeled "Voigt-Kampff" will cause McCoy to demand the character in question take a Voigt-Kampff test, which is used to determine whether a subject is human or Replicant. It is less obvious that clicking on the "Steele" option will cause the player to *warn* the Replicant about Crystal Steele (another Blade Runner). To make things more confusing, some conversation options are an either/or arrangement. Warning the Replicant about Steele will end the conversation and remove the possibility of following up on the Voigt-Kampff option, for instance. While the ability to take the story in such radically different directions is appreciated, more detailed descriptions of the conversation options would have given the player a greater understanding of the choices being made.

[top to bottom]

Ahh... home sweet home

Use the ESPER to search for clues in photographs that you find

Dektora, modeling an interesting evening ensemble

It is a testament to the quality of the story that the game manages to be enjoyable despite this problem. In many ways, the plot mirrors that of the movie, but there is enough original material to make it interesting in its own right. The acting varies from good to just mediocre, but is generally above the average caliber of talent one encounters in a game. The movie overshadows the game on that count, and it is somewhat unfortunate for the game's actors that they have such a high standard to live up to. Mark Benninghoffen (who plays Ray McCoy in the game) is not really a terrible actor, but he is certainly no Harrison Ford.

The puzzles add much to the gameplay as well, and are integrated into the story so well that it is a bit unfair to even call them puzzles. As a Blade Runner on an investigation, the player's primary goal is to collect clues relating to the case at hand. The player is equipped with a device called a KIA, which organizes and retains any clue or piece of evidence the player runs across. While these clues help the player figure out what is going on in the game, it is not necessary to find all of them to advance the story, and more than a few are red herrings. Information is as important as physical evidence, and advancing in the game is often a matter of finding the right person and asking him or her the right questions. Only a few of the puzzles are extremely difficult, and an experienced adventurer might be able to complete the game in 10-15 hours – a little on the short side, but the game's replayability adds a bit to that figure.

There are a few action sequences as well, which generally involve shootouts with other characters. These are smoothly integrated into game engine – the player can have McCoy draw his gun at any time. Doing so at an inopportune time can cause other characters to react negatively, and shooting humans can put a damper on McCoy's chances for promotion. Some of the action sequences are avoidable, and none of them are particularly difficult, so even the reflex-impaired need not be troubled by their presence.

No review of *Blade Runner* would be complete without paying tribute to the game's lush graphics. The scenes, viewed from a floating third-person perspective, are moody and alive with motion. Smoke and fog curls up from sewer vents and creeps along the ground, lights flash and cast odd shadows in the murky air, cars and people come and go, and a steady drizzle of rain falls over it all. While the positioning of the camera is static, the scenes and characters themselves are rendered in 3D, and this is very evident in the way they move through the scenes and interact with the lighting. While not as crisp as the static visuals in some games, these animated scenes are very convincing and really manage to capture the feel of the movie and set the mood for the game.

While some rough edges are evident in the overall design, they do little to belie the solid story and gameplay that lurks beneath the surface. This is just the kind of innovation the adventure genre needs, and hopefully Westwood will continue to polish this game engine in future titles. To do otherwise would be a crime. *–Benjamin E. Sones*

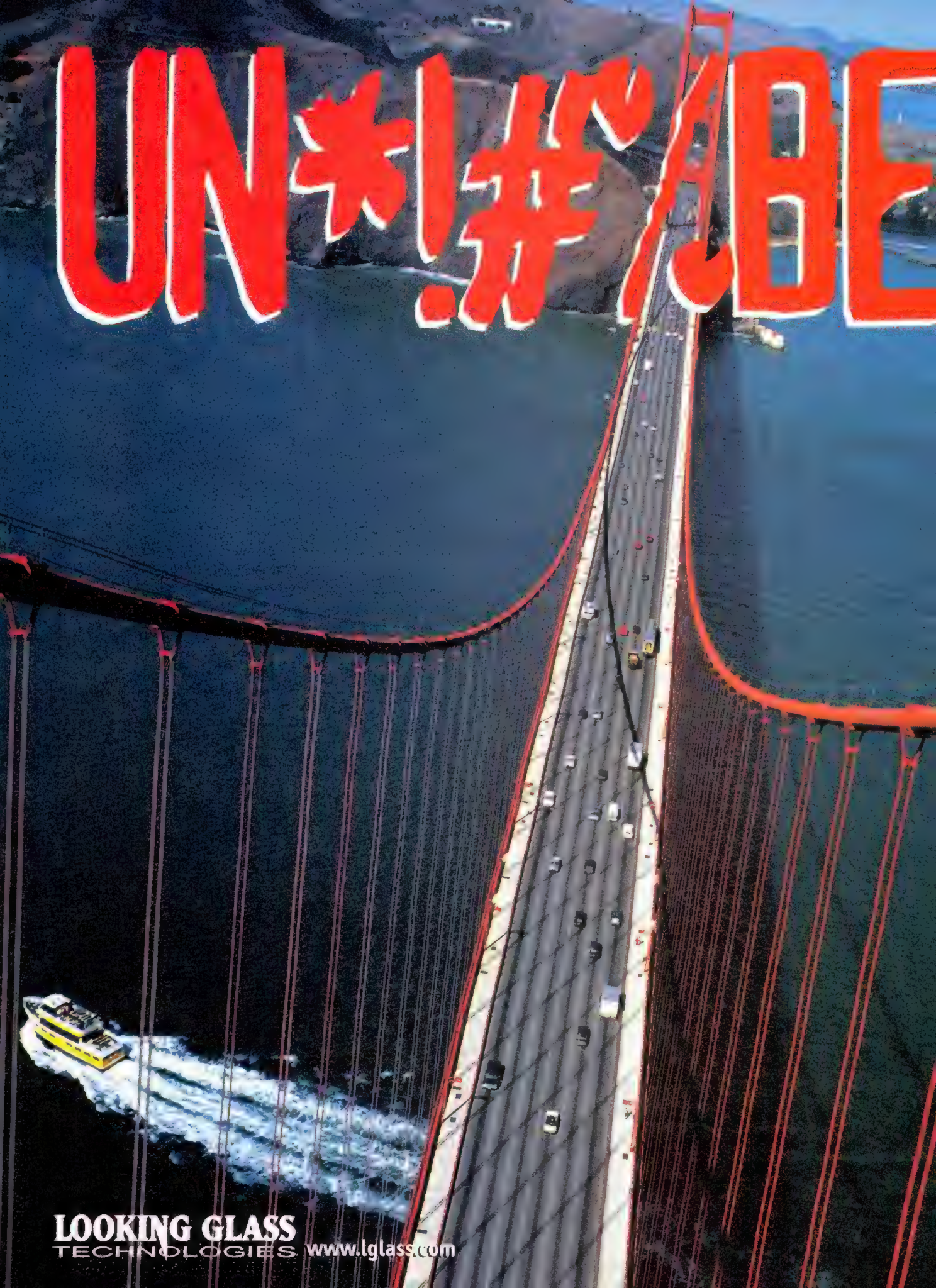
★★★★☆

Blade Runner

Westwood Studios • www.westwood.com • Requirements: Windows 95, NT 4.0, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

FALCO
MISSION COMPLETE

MICROPROSE
WWW.MICROPROSE.COM
FALCON 4.0 IS NOW CLEARED FOR FINAL APPROACH
COMING SOON


UN*!#%BE
LOOKING GLASS
TECHNOLOGIES
www.lglass.com

LIEVABLE!

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II IS SO REAL...IT'S UNREAL.

Man the cockpit of the legendary DeHaviland Beaver Seaplane and experience something you can't with any other flight sim—land on water.

Battle torrential rains and heavy crosswinds. Fly through the most hazardous, realistic weather conditions.

Test your skills attempting to evade a pair of F-16s that are trying to blast your butt out of restricted airspace.

Take off and land from any one of 48 different Bay Area airports.

Flight Unlimited II immerses you in the sheer thrill of flying like nothing you've ever experienced. Pull mind-bending G's in your quicksilver P51-D Mustang. Play chicken with F-16s. Get on the horn with Air Traffic Control as you pick your way through skies filled with aircraft. Hurtle under the Golden Gate Bridge and around the TransAmerica tower. With Flight Unlimited II, you're not just flying, you're *really* flying.

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

www.eidosinteractive.com

©1997 Looking Glass Technologies, Inc. Cambridge, MA. Flight Unlimited II and Looking Glass are trademarks of Looking Glass Technologies, Inc. All rights reserved. EIDOS Interactive is a trademark of EIDOS PLC ©1997 EIDOS.

Zork Grand Inquisitor

The Great Underground Empire strikes back

In June of 1977, before teenagers were born, before *The Simpsons*, *Cats* or *Sunny Delight*, a couple of twisted guys at MIT put together a text-based adventure game that would one day be *Zork*. Under an ordinary White House lies the Great Underground Empire, a subterranean kingdom in which you, the adventurer, match wits with the game designer via an all-text interface. Twenty years, several companies, a myriad of technological advances and 12 related products later, we are presented with *Zork Grand Inquisitor*, a game that attempts to trace the spirit of Zork back to its roots. The two previous *Zork* titles, although more or less highly acclaimed, were widely criticized for having failed to do just that. *Return to Zork*, although mildly humorous and *Zork*ish, is very far removed from the history of the Great Underground Empire; and *Zork Nemesis* is a very dark slice of *Zork*, devoid of *any* humor – sinister and foreboding. *Zork Grand Inquisitor* lives up to its promise to deliver unto us the wacky soul of the earliest *Zorks*; even the full motion video doesn't hurt (much).

"Who is the boss of you? I AM THE BOSS OF YOU! Who is the boss of you? Me! I…AM THE BOSS OF YOU!" These words accompany the game's introductory 1940's style newsreel, a satire entitled "Propaganda On Parade." The year is 1067 GUE (which turns out to be 101 years after the end of *Beyond Zork* and *Spellbreaker*, 118 years after *Zork Nemesis*, and 580 before *Return to Zork*). Yannick, The Grand Inquisitor, has banned magic throughout the land. Since he embarrassingly failed magic courses at GUE Tech, he allowed the spoiled brat in him to declare that now *no one* may prestidigitate. Why? Because "I AM THE BOSS OF YOU," shouts Yannick. A curfew was established, the Underground sealed, and anyone caught in defiance of the smug little bastard is Totemized. We don't know exactly what that is, initially, but it involves scary looking machinery and we're told it hurts.

The LOUD WORDS of the Grand Inquisitor are also pumped through the public address system of Port Foozle as you arrive there selling Frobozz Electric Perma-Suck machines. As if being a Perma-Suck salesman isn't bad enough, you find that curfew starts in five seconds, no one in town will talk to you after curfew, the Inquisition is no fun, and the loudspeaker is very annoying. After a puzzle or two, you acquire <angels voices here> the Lantern, without which (as in any *Zork* game) you are consistently eaten by a grue. The lantern contains the spirit of Dalbozz, a Dungeon Master imprisoned there by Yannick. He becomes your right arm and alter-ego for the rest of the game.

With Dalbozz in your hand… at your side… OK, in your inventory, you are able to pursue the greater quest, which is to unseat the Grand Inquisitor and restore magic to the land. To do so you must enter the Great Underground Empire, master spellcasting and time travel, and find three artifacts that have been hidden in different eras by Yannick: The Coconut of Quendor ("sometimes ya feel like a nut…"), the Skull of Yoruck (if Hamlet will ever let go of it) and the Cube of Foundation (Asimov's childhood toy).

Most folks who have played the early *Zorks* will probably be satisfied with the game's visual translation. Descriptions of locations from the text adventures are nicely represented by their graphical counterparts (although it would have been admirable to see them in a higher resolution). The White House is properly barricaded, Hades bears its requisite "Abandon All Hope" sign and Flood Control Dam #3 is complete with colored buttons. While it's certain that everyone's imagination painted something completely different during the text games, and while there will probably be some who shout, "But where's the *brown* button at the dam?" (shoot them now), few will argue that the game suffers as a result of its graphical style. *Au contraire*. The look is a successful

[top to bottom]

Don't let the smile fool you, you're not getting in without a zorkmid or two

An odd looking cocoa perculator

The alarm system at the Dungeon Master's house is no pushover

EXPAND your world with NRI

CHOOSE HANDS-ON TRAINING IN:

- PC Servicing
- Computer Programming
- Game Programming
- Multimedia Programming, and more!

NRI has new products and services we just know you won't be able to pass up — a powerful Pentium® MMX PC that you train with and keep, a new course in Game Programming Fundamentals, great diagnostic and interactive software in our newly updated PC Servicing course, and an all-new Computer Programming course featuring in-depth coverage of your choice of popular languages.

The Computer Programming and PC Servicing courses feature the Pentium® 200 MMX PC, Norton Interactive CD-ROM, and a guaranteed Windows 98 upgrade.

PC Servicing

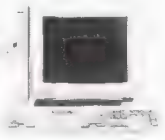
In NRI's PC Servicing course, you'll become acquainted with the Internet, perform actual experiments with today's most sophisticated diagnostic tools, and experiment with NRI's exclusive labs: computer-aided electronics demonstrations, 8085 Microprocessor, and NRI Discovery Lab, a complete breadboarding system. With the active support of helpful NRI instructors, this course will also help you prepare for the A+ certification exam, with updated lessons and interactive tutorial.

Computer Programming

Whatever your previous experience, NRI's Computer Programming course gives you the hands-on training you need to compete in today's high-tech marketplace. Step by step, you acquire basic skills and master more complex programming design concepts and techniques, ultimately focusing in depth on your choice of languages: Visual Basic, C++, or Java.

The Pentium® 200 MHz PC

- MMX™ technology
- 16 meg RAM
- 1.6 gigabyte hard drive
- VGA color monitor
- 8X CD-ROM drive
- 16-bit sound card
- 33,600 baud fax/modem



Game Programming Fundamentals

Learn programming the easy way in this new course featuring graphic simulations, animation, and sound effects. Not only will you learn the fundamentals of game programming, but you'll also gain an in-depth understanding of your choice of programming languages: Visual Basic, C++, or Java. An exploding field in programming, computer gaming has a strong and growing market among the MTV-generation. This course teaches you how a popular computer game was written, from storyboarding to coding. In addition to covering game design, performance, and debugging, you'll gain hands-on experience as you make direct modifications to the game itself.

Please note: You must own a PC and be computer literate in order to take this program. A personal computer is not included.

SEND TODAY FOR YOUR FREE CATALOG!

NRI Schools
4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20008

Or call 1-800-321-4634
Ext. 2968

✓ **Check for a free catalog.**

- PC Servicing
- Computer Programming Fundamentals
- Game Programming
- Networking with Windows NT
- Desktop Publishing with PageMaker
- Multimedia Programming
- Mastering Microsoft Office
- PC Applications Specialist
- Electronic Music Technology
- Bookkeeping and Accounting

OR GET YOUR AAS DEGREE!

- Accounting
- Business Management
- Computer Science
- General Studies

Name _____ (please print) Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

Accredited Member, Distance Education and Training Council

5562-0298

Watch your job prospects rise with NRI's innovative PC training

Businesses everywhere promise solid employment prospects for people with the skills to create software for a Windows environment, program multimedia applications, or set up office networking systems. Now, you can prepare for success in today's hottest PC careers with your choice of NRI's innovative new courses:

Networking with Windows NT

Networking has revolutionized the workplace. Now you can make it your specialty! NRI's Networking with Windows NT course enables you to earn top dollar setting up network foundations with Windows NT 4.0, the leading server in terms of power, usability, and integration. This comprehensive course gives you the skills to install, maintain, troubleshoot, and adapt the kind of networks today's businesses need to operate efficiently.

Desktop Publishing with PageMaker™

Today, businesses of every kind need skilled desktop publishers to create eye-catching, result-getting publications. And now, NRI has just updated its popular desktop publishing course to feature today's most sought-after software, Adobe PageMaker 5.0. NRI's course moves from the basics of design to the intricacies of electronic publishing and the Internet, giving you the complete know-how you need to succeed in a new career or an exciting home-based business.

Multimedia Programming

You can create the kinds of contemporary multimedia programs that make everything — from shopping to education to business presentations — easier and more exciting. NRI's newest programming course helps you bring text and graphics to life with sound, animation, and photo-quality images. As you become skilled with the professional-level Asymetrix Toolbook authoring software included in your course, you'll be able to add drama and impact to all your computer applications, ultimately creating the kinds of dynamic programs that will put you at the forefront of multimedia technology.

SEND POSTAGE-PAID CARD FOR YOUR FREE CATALOG!

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 10008 WASHINGTON, D.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

NRI Schools
4401 CONNECTICUT AVENUE NW
WASHINGTON DC 20078-3543

Mastering Microsoft Office

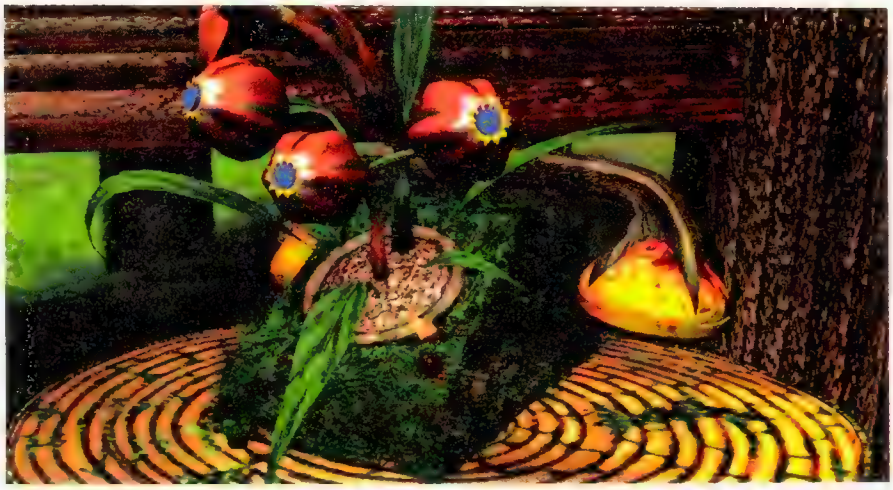
Learn the ins and outs of Microsoft Office Pro, today's most popular software suite. This comprehensive course, which includes a Pentium® 166 multimedia PC, features an innovative combination of easy-to-follow lessons, online tutorials, and hands-on projects so that you can use Office's word processing spreadsheet, database management, and other applications like a pro!

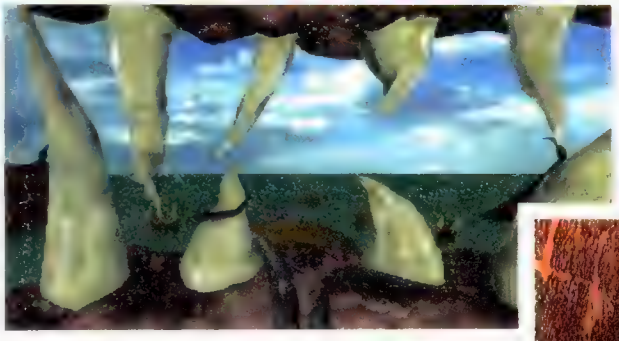
NEW!

PC Options Plan — Keep up with late-breaking advances in technology by upgrading your computer system at special student rates. It's NRI's state-of-the art guarantee!

cross between slick and charming. The only exceptions occur during the (gulp) full-motion video sequences.

We seldom expect FMV characters to look quite at home in rendered environments. Here is no exception. They generally (but not always) look out of place graphically – but in spite of this, they work. The main reason for this is that the acting is very good. Both voice and digitized actors are generally of higher quality than usual across the board. In addition, they're funny. They're written funny and they play funny; so we have a good script combined with actors dead-on in their characterizations. Antharia Jack (a takeoff of Indiana Jones), who runs the Port Foozle Pawn Shop, is played brilliantly by Dirk Benedict (Starbuck on *Battlestar Gallactica* and Face on *The A-Team*). He is the most frequently encountered of the NPC's, and certainly the least forgettable. Rip Taylor, looking for all the world like a double for the Gatekeeper at Emerald City, is Yannick's henchman, Wartle. Y'Gael, blithe spirit of the underground from whom you acquire your spell book, is a wonderful character as well, a very savvy cross between Glinda and Fanny Brice.



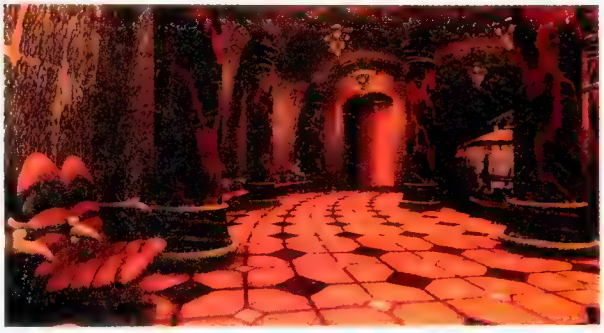


[top to bottom]

Order now, and get this dandy chia-phone absolutely free

Don't turn around now, a terrifying epiglottis is behind you

This underground station has been rid of unsightly graffiti



Zork Grand Inquisitor's engine is similar to the one in *Zork Nemesis* – first person 360-degree rotation, with fixed paths. Navigation is also possible via teleportation stations at almost every location. Insert your map and poof! There you're not. Of course, if you're daring, you can travel the Great Underground Subway, which, when summoned, doesn't stop… it just slows down a bit and a mechanical hand grabs you off the platform. The puzzles are the comfortable, grass-roots kind, of varying difficulty, and also interspersed with humor.

Each of the artifacts must be claimed from another Zorkian era by a currently Totemized character. Send a Totem back through time and you are able to control a Griff, a Brogmoid or Lucy Flathead (with a 'do that has to be seen to be believed) in a mini-quest. There is the Little-Chess-Puzzle-That-Wasn't, and, unfortunately, the old "slip the paper under the door; poke the keyhole so that the key on the wrong side of the door falls onto the paper; then pull the paper (with the key!) back under the door" puzzle. (They couldn't have been serious about its inclusion. Or could they? Ah, history.) Ample clues are offered throughout the game so that no puzzle feels intuitively unsolvable. Interestingly enough, though, many puzzles *are* unsolvable as is, and require a leap of logic or…magick (hey, where'd that "K" come from?).

Spellcasting remains the center of a lot of the puzzle solving. You will find scrolls, which are then "gnustoed" into your spell book (provided they have been spell-checked). They have funny names like BEBURTT and SNAVIG, and do useful stuff like turn purple things invisible.

The story is linear, but not so restrictively that you feel too often trapped; and it is always possible to die here…whether you are eaten by a grue, or have walked into a bottomless pit, your fatality is lauded by a blank text screen onto which is typed the action that you foolishly attempted, followed by *Zork*'s traditional **_you have died_** message: "Your score is 24 out of a possible 1000 giving you the rank of Unfathomable Jerk."

Finally two add-ons are offered as enhancements – a throw forward and a throwback. On the forward side is a multi-player linked play option allowing players to solve with a partner. One player controls the game, and the other is able to watch and comment; fairly useless? Maybe, except perhaps to solicit online help. And on the retro side is a delightful text adventure, *Zork: The Undiscovered Underground*, a prequel to *Grand Inquisitor*, written by none other than Marc Blank (one of the creators of *Zork*) and Mike Berlyn (another Infocom writer), a really terrific bonus for those who loved and *still* love text adventures, an introduction to those who have never played them, and an anachronistic relic to others.

Zork Grand Inquisitor is a funny, solid, well crafted, well-written, well-acted adventure. All in all, it's a bit too short, and the three sub-quests (which really should present the bulk of activity, since their solutions ultimately solve the main quest) are terse and anticlimactic. Expanding on the ability to play three additional (and *extremely* engaging) characters would have really put this game over the top. Nonetheless, it has more going for it than many adventures on the shelf today, and for *Zork* players or the non-initiated, it's a must-do. After all, you get to play (and win) Strip Grue, Fire, Water (like Rock, Paper, Scissors), with Antharia Jack! And as his clothes drop slowly, piece by piece, you'll find… that the whole thing is censored. Oh well. –*Cindy Yans*

★★★★☆

Zork Grand Inquisitor

Activision • www.activision.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16 MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 players via Internet, modem

CHIPS & BITS INC.

POB 234 DEPT 10971 ROCHESTER, VT 05767

INT'L 802-767-3033 FAX 802-767-3382

Huge Selection

World Wide Shipping

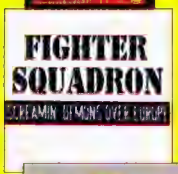
Great Prices

'FLYING NIGHTMARES 2' offers a unique combination of cutting-edge flight simulation and real-time strategy. Fully adjustable difficulty levels, control options, and graphics preferences allow nearly any player to enjoy FN2's challenge. Virtual cockpits increase the realism and your situational awareness.

Eidos (Simulation)
Release Date: 1/98 PC CD $37

'1943:EUROPEAN AIR WAR' Pilot 20 authentically modeled fighter planes from the American, British and German forces. Play in single mission, career or multiplayer modes. Includes virtual cockpits, flight film, radio communication and great sound and visual effects.

Microprose (Simulation)
Release Date: 5/98 PC CD $45



'FIGHTER SQUADRON:SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE' Each of the nine planes flies just like its real-world counterpart, and contains 30 unique scenarios. Planes take damage on a per-polygon basis, which realistically and adversely affects handling .

Activision (Simulation)
Release Date: 12/97 PC CD $47

'RED BARON II' You will become immersed in World War I and the career of the brave young men who piloted the flying machines in the dangerous dawn of aviation. Engage in deadly dog fights, strafe an enemy aerodrome as you line up your nemesis in your sights.

Sierra (Simulation)
Release Date: 12/97 PC CD $47

'QUAKE II' Quake was just foreplay. Now comes Quake II. Includes larger, mission based levels, superior artificial intelligence, and wicked multiplayer capabilities. Experience smoother 16 bit graphics and real-time lighting effects.

Activision (Action)
Release Date: 12/97 PC CD $45

'TOMB RAIDER 2' Lara's back, and better than ever, with new moves, a new underwater environment and a whole new arsenal. Explore huge, exotic platform-based 3D environments around the world, solve puzzles and kill baddies.

Price Before Rebate $41
Instant Rebate $_
Price After Rebate $35*

Eidos (Action)
Release Date:NOW
PC CD

'UNREAL' In one seamless flowing world, race across vast outdoor and indoor environments, enter enchanting cities and mysterious temples. Use Unreal's easy to use object-oriented level-editor to design your own levels.

GT Interactive (Action)
Release Date: 4/98 PC CD $45

'BLADE RUNNER' Armed with your investigative skills and the tools of the Blade Runner trade, you'll be immersed in a world that lives and breathes around you with breakthrough lighting and visual effects. Interact with over 70 motion captured characters, all with AI and their own agendas.

Virgin (Adventure)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $53

'CH GAMESTICK 14' The comfortable base is equipped with 14 functions, a slide throttle, trim controls, two directional pads and patented gimbal. Designed for both left and right handed gamers.

CH Products (Hardware)
Release Date: NOW PC $60

'CRYSTAL FANTASY' Venture through the cave of lust and find the secret crystal. Interact with the sexiest young jewels of the MacDaddy harem. Take snapshots of the girls and play with them in your own private portfolio.

MacDaddy (Adult)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $39

'ROMSOFT 3 PACK' Captured Elegance, Penetration, and She's So Sleazy are what you'll get in this sexy 3 pack!

Romsoft (Adult)
Release Date: NOW PC 3-CD $19

***Specials- Limited Time Only- Offer Good from 1/1/98 through 2/10/98**

COMPUTER GAMES: SIMULATION

Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price
10th Planet	04/98	$48	Falcon 4.0	04/98	$52	MechWarrior 3	06/98	$52	Skies	06/98	$48
1943 Euro Air War	05/98	$45	Falcon Gold	NOW	$25	Mig Alley	03/98	$46	Spearhead	NOW	$49
688i Hunter Killer	NOW	$46	Fghtng Flcn Bck Bgdd	NOW	$26	Moto Racer GP	NOW	$43	Spearhead Exp Pack	12/97	$29
AH-64D Longbow 2	NOW	$46	Fighter Duel 2	04/98	$48	Nascar Racing 2	NOW	$39	Stealth Reaper 2020	12/97	$39
ATF 98	NOW	$46	Flight Unlimited 2	12/97	$44	Nascr Rcng 2 Mngr	04/98	$25	Tank!	02/98	$48
Aces: X-Fighters	03/98	$49	Flying Corps Gold	NOW	$39	Nascr Rcng 2 Busch	NOW	$30	Team Apache	03/98	$44
Air Cmbt Nvy Ftrs 97	NOW	$45	Flying Saucer	02/98	$46	Need for Speed 2 SE	NOW	$44	Test Drive 4	NOW	$46
Air Warrior 3	12/97	$47	Flying Tigers	09/98	$48	Outlaw Racers	03/98	$39	Test Drive Off Road	NOW	$19
Armored Fist 2	NOW	$46	Formula 1 CE	NOW	$44	Phantom Ace	04/98	$48	Thunder Truck Rally	NOW	$45
Brnout Chmp Drgrcng	04/98	$44	Hardwar	NOW	$46	Privateer 2 SE	NOW	$39	Thunderstrike	NOW	$37
Comanche 3	NOW	$39	Harrier 2020	01/98	$45	Racing Days	NOW	$32	Touring Car	01/98	$42
Deep Six	03/98	$46	Heavy Gear	NOW	$44	Red Baron 2 W95	12/97	$47	Trophy Bass 2	NOW	$39
EF 2000 V 2	NOW	$45	Interstate 77	02/98	$46	Redline	12/97	$46	Trophy Bass 2 Exp. Pk	NOW	$19
Earthsiege 3	01/98	$49	J Fghtr Lghtning Strk	NOW	$43	Road to Indy 500	12/97	$44	Trophy Bass Rivers	NOW	$49
F-15	03/98	$48	Jet Fighter Fll Burn	12/97	$46	SODA Off-Road Rcing	NOW	$46	Wing Commander 4	NOW	$26
F-16 Agressor	02/98	$48	Jet Fighter Platinum	NOW	$38	SU-27 Flanker 2	04/98	$43	Wing Commander 5	12/97	$46
F-22 ADF	NOW	$48	Joint Strike Fighter	01/98	$44	SU-27 Flnkr 2 Add-On	03/98	$29	Wings of Destiny	02/98	$49
F-22 Lightning 2	NOW	$26	M1 Tank Platoon 2	03/98	$52	SabrAce	NOW	$42	X-Car Exprmntl Rcn	NOW	$48
F-22 Raptor	NOW	$46	M1A2 Abrams 3D	02/98	$47	Screamer 2	NOW	$24	X-Wing Vs. Tie Cmp 1	NOW	$32
F/A 18 Korea	NOW	$43	MS Flight Sim 98	NOW	$52	Scrmn Demns Europe	12/97	$52	X-Wng V Tie Fghter	NOW	$50
F16 Fighting Falcon	NOW	$48	MW Mercenaries 3Dfx	NOW	$48	Sierra Pro Pilot	NOW	$47	iF-22 Raptor	NOW	$39
FA 18 Hornet 3	NOW	$44	Mech 2 Battlepack	NOW	$48	Silent Hunter CE	NOW	$26	iPanzer 44	02/98	$47

COMPUTER GAMES: HARDWARE

ATI Expression 2MB	NOW	$77	CH Pro Pedals	NOW	$80	Joyswitch	NOW	$42	Sound Blaster 64 Val	NOW	$149
ATI Xpert at Play 4MB	NOW	$169	CH Racing Wheel	NOW	$49	Labtec LCS 2612 Spk	NOW	$112	Space Orb 360	NOW	$72
Altc ACS55 Spker Sys	NOW	$152	CH Racng Whl W/ Ped	NOW	$85	Ltech Cyberman 2	NOW	$99	Stealth 64 2 MB V	NOW	$199
Altec ACS PwrCbe Pls	NOW	$142	CH Virtual Pilot Pro	NOW	$75	Ltech WingMn Wrrior	NOW	$85	Stealth 64.2 MB D	NOW	$109
BOCA 56K F/M Int	NOW	$109	Creative Encore DVD	NOW	$339	MS Sidewinder Pro	NOW	$44	TM Driving Control T2	NOW	$115
CH F16 Combatstick	NOW	$60	Diamond 3D 2000	NOW	$99	MS Sidewinder FF Pro	NOW	$149	TM F16 TQS	NOW	$108
CH F16 Fighterstick	NOW	$100	Diamond Monster 3D	NOW	$189	MS Sdewndr Prec Pro	NOW	$68	TM F22 Pro	NOW	$134
CH Force FX	NOW	$95	Diamond Stealth 2	NOW	$99	MS Sidwinder Pro Pad	NOW	$39	TM Nascar Racng Whl	NOW	$125
CH Game Card 3 Auto	NOW	$26	Diamond Viper 330	NOW	$189	Nintendo PC 3D JystckN	NOW	$54	TM Rage 3D Pad	NOW	$40
CH PC Gamepad	NOW	$19	Int Intnse 3D Rush	NOW	$199	Sound Blaster 64 Gld	NOW	$189	US Robotics 33.6 Int	NOW	$136

COMPUTER GAMES: 3D ACTION

Battlezone	03/98	$48	Dead Unity	04/98	$45	Postal	NOW	$46	Sin	03/98	$49
Bugriders	12/97	$40	Death Trap Dungeon	01/98	$48	Postal Level Editor	NOW	$48	SpecOps	02/98	$48
Carmageddon	NOW	$36	Defiance	NOW	$39	Prey	08/98	$50	Take No Prisoners	NOW	$41
Carmageddon Splt Pk	NOW	$16	Doom 2	NOW	$25	Profiteer	03/98	$45	Terra Victus	02/98	$48
Chasm	NOW	$28	Dreams to Reality	NOW	$40	Quake. X-Men for Qke2	12/97	$22	Tomb Raider	NOW	$37
D-Day 99	12/97	$38	Duke 3D Plutnium Pk	NOW	$19	Redneck Rampage	NOW	$36	Turok Dinosaur Huntr	NOW	$42
Daikatana	03/98	$49	Duke Nukem Forever	06/98	$48	Redneck Wanna Be	NOW	$16	Turok Dinosr Huntr 2	12/97	$46
Dark Forces Jedi Msn	01/98	$32	Duke Nukm 3D Atom	NOW	$34	Requiem	04/98	$46	Wreckin Crew	12/97	$48
Dark Frces Jedi Knght	NOW	$50	Half Life	03/98	$48	Resident Evil	NOW	$40	XS	NOW	$46
Dark Vengeance	03/98	$45	Hexen 2	NOW	$47	Shadows of Empire	NOW	$51	qED for Quake	NOW	$19

COMPUTER GAMES: SPORTS

3D Ultra Mini Golf	NOW	$42	FPS Trophy Bass Rvrs	NOW	$48	MS Baseball 3D	NOW	$45	PGA Tour Pro 3-D	NOW	$50
AMF Pro Bowl 3D	NOW	$25	Gone Fishin'	NOW	$19	Madden FB 98	NOW	$45	Pro Golf	12/97	$42
Baseball Mogul	12/97	$44	Hardball 6	01/98	$46	Mleague Baseball 6	NOW	$34	Ten Pin Alley W95	NOW	$40
Bass Mstrs Clssic Pro	04/98	$42	Legends of FB 98	NOW	$39	NBA Action 98	NOW	$42	Tony LaRussa 4	NOW	$34
British Open Golf	NOW	$24	Links LS 98	NOW	$33	NBA Live 98	NOW	$45	Triple Play 97	NOW	$48
Brunswicks Bowling	01/98	$39	Links LS Cng Ctry Clb	NOW	$19	NCAA Football 98	NOW	$45	Triple Play 98	NOW	$45
FIFA Road Wrld Cp 98	NOW	$46	Links LS Davis Love	NOW	$25	NHL Breakaway 98	NOW	$42	Trophy Bass Deluxe	12/97	$47
FPS Baseball 98	NOW	$28	Links LS Oakind Hills	NOW	$19	NHL Hockey 98	NOW	$45	VR Baseball 97	NOW	$42
FPS Football 98	NOW	$29	Links LS Valderrama	NOW	$19	NHL Power Play 98	NOW	$34	Worldwide Soccer 98	NOW	$39
FPS Skiing	NOW	$47	Links LS Valhalla	NOW	$19	PBA Bowling 2	NOW	$35	Wrld Cup Golf Dr Bch	NOW	$19

COMPUTER GAMES: ADVENTURE

7th Guest 2	NOW	$29	Last Express	NOW	$32	Planetfall W95	01/98	$44	Star Trk Str Flt Acad	NOW	$48
Abe's Odysee	NOW	$44	Leisure Suit Larry 7	NOW	$48	Redguard	02/98	$54	Starship Titanic	02/98	$48
Aden Quest	01/98	$43	Lost Mnd Dr Brain 2	12/97	$42	Respect Inc	03/98	$45	Str Trk Scrt Vlcn Fry	12/97	$48
Alien Earth	03/98	$45	MTG:Duels Plneswlkrs	NOW	$46	Return to Krondor	02/98	$45	Temujin	NOW	$45
Alien Intelligence	02/98	$45	Metal Works	12/97	$38	Riana Rouge	01/98	$39	Tone Rebellion	NOW	$41
Curse of Monkey Isle	NOW	$39	Myst	NOW	$23	Secret of Black Onyx	01/98	$46	Trial	01/98	$44
Dark Camelot	03/98	$48	Myst 2	NOW	$46	Siege of Stormhaven	10/98	$48	Twinsen's Odyssey	NOW	$44
Grim Fandango	06/98	$48	Neverhood	NOW	$50	Space Bar	NOW	$31	Ubik	02/98	$42
Journeyman Projct 3	01/98	$48	Of Light & Darkness	02/98	$45	Space Quest 3000	01/98	$45	Zork. Grnd Inquisitor	NOW	$43
KQ8 Mask of Eternity	05/98	$48	Overseer	12/97	$43	Star Trek Voyager	NOW	$48	Zork:Nemesis	NOW	$29

HINT BOOKS

Age of Empire	NOW	$16	Diablo	NOW	$16	Mechwarrior 3	03/98	$16	Star Trek Star Flt Acad	NOW	$18
Agents of Justice	NOW	$16	Earthsiege 3	11/97	$16	Might & Magic 6	NOW	$16	Starcraft	NOW	$16
Air Warrior 2	NOW	$16	Fallout	NOW	$16	Might & Magic Comp	NOW	$16	Steel Panthers 3	11/97	$16
BattleTech Elementals	NOW	$16	Heavy Gear	11/97	$18	Myst 2: Riven	NOW	$16	Tomb Raider 2	11/97	$10
Best Srtegy & Wr Gm	NOW	$19	Hexen 2	NOW	$16	Myth	11/97	$16	Twinsen's Odyssey	NOW	$18
Betrayal in Antara	NOW	$16	Imperialism	NOW	$16	Pax Imperia 2	NOW	$16	Ultima Online	NOW	$16
Civilization 2	NOW	$16	Land Lore 2	NOW	$16	Rebellion	NOW	$16	Unreal	NOW	$16
Curse of Monkey Isle	NOW	$16	Lords of Magic	NOW	$16	Red Baron 2	NOW	$16	Warlords 3	NOW	$16
Dark Forces 2	NOW	$16	Lords of Realm 2	NOW	$16	Return to Krondor	02/98	$16	X-COM: Apocalypse	NOW	$16
Dark Reign	NOW	$16	Mech2 Mercenaries	NOW	$16	Simcity 3000	NOW	$16	Zork: Grand Inquisitr	NOW	$18

COMPUTER GAMES: ADULT

All Night Long	NOW	$16	Domin-A-Trix 2	NOW	$24	La Blue Girl 4	NOW	$22	Sex With Asia	NOW	$42
Bangkok Nights	NOW	$19	Dream Machine 2	NOW	$49	Latex	NOW	$44	Shock:The Game	NOW	$49
Busty Babes 4	NOW	$39	Duke Screw em	NOW	$46	Latin Lust	NOW	$24	Space Sirens 2	NOW	$34
Cabin Fever	NOW	$34	Elite Models 4	NOW	$19	Nightwatch Int 3	NOW	$46	Tabloid Beauties	NOW	$19
Crystal Fantasy	NOW	$29	Eros 3	NOW	$24	Outpost 69	NOW	$40	Tokyo Nightlife	NOW	$48
CyberXperience	NOW	$29	Face Jam	NOW	$27	Penetration	NOW	$16	Ultra Vixen	NOW	$49
Deep Thrt Girls 5	NOW	$26	Fantascenes 3	NOW	$39	Private Investigatr	NOW	$49	Venus 5	NOW	$20
Diva X NJ	NOW	$39	Girlfriend Donna	NOW	$49	Romsoft Six Pk 2	NOW	$36	Virtual Sex 2	NOW	$39
Diva X Rebecca	NOW	$39	Jade Palace	NOW	$19	Ropes & Chains	NOW	$19	Virtual Victor	NOW	$42
Diva X Kaoru	NOW	$39	Japan Interactive	NOW	$46	Samurai Pervert 2	NOW	$49	You Dn't Knw Dick	NOW	$39

©1997 CHIPS & BITS INC

New Releases

Serving Since 1989

Open 24 Hours

www.cdmag.com/chips.html
or call 1-800-699-4263
Source Code 10071

COMPUTER GAMES: STRATEGY

Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price	Title	Release	Price
10 Six	01/98	$35	Dark Reign Futre War	NOW	$43	Lords Realm 2	NOW	$31	Siege	05/98	$48
1830 RR/Rbbr Baron	NOW	$34	Dark Reign MP 1	02/98	$29	Lords Realm 2 Exp Pk	NOW	$25	SimSafari	12/97	$44
7th Legion	NOW	$35	Deadlock	NOW	$28	Lords of Magic	12/97	$47	Soldiers at War	02/98	$43
AD&D Birthright	NOW	$27	Deadlock 2	12/97	$46	M Gathrng Battlemage	NOW	$36	Spaceward Ho! 4	NOW	$24
Adhara 3	12/97	$45	Destiny	NOW	$19	MAX	NOW	$19	Speed Tribes	04/98	$48
Admiral Ancient Ships	02/98	$46	Dominion Storm	03/98	$44	MAX 2	03/98	$48	Star General	NOW	$43
Advanced Civilization	NOW	$39	Dune 2	NOW	$14	Magic Spells of Anct	NOW	$28	Star Nations	06/98	$46
Afterlife	NOW	$29	Dungeon Keeper	NOW	$42	Magic:the Gathering	NOW	$16	Starcraft Expansion	03/98	$30
Age of Empires	NOW	$46	Dungn Kpr Dpr Dngns	NOW	$19	Mass Destruction	NOW	$38	Stars	NOW	$38
Agents of Justice	03/98	$48	Earth 2140	NOW	$36	Master of Magic	NOW	$25	Starship Troopers	05/98	$46
Arm. Men	03/98	$46	Emperor Fading Suns	NOW	$29	Master of Orion	NOW	$19	Steel Legions	05/98	$42
C & C	NOW	$29	Enemy Nations	NOW	$29	Master of Orion 2	NOW	$25	Stellar Frontier	06/98	$44
C & C 2 Tiberium Sn	09/98	$48	Entrepeneur	NOW	$38	Mechcommander	05/98	$48	Stratosphere	02/98	$46
C & C Covrt Oprtions	NOW	$22	Evolution	01/98	$34	Mission Nexus Prime	12/97	$48	Submarine Titans	05/98	$44
C & C Gold W95	NOW	$40	Extreme Tactics	12/97	$49	Missn Frc.Cybrstrm 2	04/98	$42	Syndicate Wars	NOW	$39
C & C RA Aftermath	NOW	$22	Fallen Haven	NOW	$26	Navy Strike	NOW	$34	Theme Hospital	NOW	$42
C & C RA Cntr Strke	NOW	$21	Fantasy General	NOW	$34	Netstorm	NOW	$40	Total Annihilation	NOW	$43
C & C Red Alert	NOW	$48	Fragile Allegiance	NOW	$46	New Order	04/98	$48	Tycho Rising	03/98	$44
C & C Sole Survivor	NOW	$29	Freedom in Galaxy	09/98	$42	Outpost 2	NOW	$37	Ultimate Civ 2	03/98	$48
Caesar 2	NOW	$28	Frenzy	02/98	$44	Pax Imperia 2	NOW	$39	Unnatural Selection	NOW	$19
Capitalism Plus	NOW	$43	Galactic Mirage	NOW	$41	Plague	04/98	$42	Uprising	NOW	$40
Captives	NOW	$40	Heist	02/98	$44	Politika	NOW	$43	WarBreeds	01/98	$48
Cave Wars	NOW	$25	Heroes M&M 2	NOW	$26	Ragged Earth	01/98	$34	WarGames	02/98	$46
Chaos Island	01/98	$46	Heroes M&M 2 Ex Pk	NOW	$19	Reach for Stars 2	02/98	$48	WarSport	12/97	$44
Civ 2 Fantasy Worlds	NOW	$27	Heroes M&M W95	NOW	$19	Rebellion	01/98	$52	Warcraft 2	NOW	$25
Civilization 2	NOW	$38	Hidden Wars	01/98	$48	Return Fire	NOW	$37	Warcraft 2 70 Levels	NOW	$19
Civilization 2 Scen	NOW	$26	History of World	NOW	$39	Risk	NOW	$39	Warcraft 2 Add On	NOW	$20
Clay Warfare	02/98	$45	Imperialism	NOW	$32	SWAT 2	12/97	$48	Warlords 2 Dlx	NOW	$41
Cong New World Dlx	NOW	$24	Incubation	NOW	$39	Semper Fi	02/98	$47	Warlords 3	NOW	$39
Conquest Earth	NOW	$44	Infinity War	12/97	$48	Sentient	NOW	$40	Warwind 2	NOW	$34
Constructor	NOW	$42	Jagdd Allnc Ddly Gme	NOW	$19	Sentinel Returns	03/98	$45	Wisdom of the Kings	NOW	$46
Corsairs	01/98	$43	Jagged Alliance 2	03/98	$48	Settlers 2 Gold	NOW	$38	Worms 2	NOW	$39
Creature	NOW	$34	KKND Extreme	NOW	$38	Seven Kingdoms	NOW	$47	X-Com Apocalypse	NOW	$39
Dark Colony	NOW	$43	Liberation Day	NOW	$36	Shattered Nations	03/98	$46	X-Com Terr frm Deep	NOW	$19

COMPUTER GAMES: WAR

Achtung Spitfire	NOW	$36	Battlegrnd Waterloo	NOW	$28	Grt Bttls of Hannibal	NOW	$47	Sid Meier's Gettysbrg	NOW	$45
Afrika Korps	04/98	$42	Civil War Generals	NOW	$48	Man of War	NOW	$37	Stalingrad	NOW	$39
Aide de Camp 2	12/97	$44	Close Combat 2	NOW	$46	Napoleon in Russia	NOW	$42	Steel Panthers 2	NOW	$27
Battle of Bulge	03/98	$42	Close Combat	NOW	$38	Over the Reich	NOW	$32	Steel Panthers 3	NOW	$39
Battlegrnd Antietam	NOW	$41	East Front	NOW	$42	Pacific General	NOW	$35	TACOPS 98	02/98	$40
Battlegrnd Bulge	NOW	$28	Fifth Fleet	NOW	$39	Panzer Commander	06/98	$45	Tank Resistance 2024	02/98	$39
Battlegrnd Bull Run	NOW	$42	Final Liberation	NOW	$42	Panzer General 2	NOW	$42	Third Reich	NOW	$39
Battlegrnd Gettysbrg	NOW	$32	Great Battles Caesar	03/98	$46	Panzerblitz	03/98	$42	Tigers on Prowl 2	NOW	$42
Battlegrnd Mid East	05/98	$42	Great Battls Alexndr	NOW	$40	Prelude to Waterloo	NOW	$45	V Victory Bundle	NOW	$28
Battlegrnd Shiloh	NOW	$30	Great Bttles Napoleon	08/98	$47	R E Lee CW General	NOW	$28	Whistling Death	02/98	$40

BOARD GAMES

ASL Johansata	NOW	$10	Field Command	NOW	$30	Pain Doctor	NOW	$25	Settlers of Catan	NOW	$30
ASL Paratrooper	NOW	$15	Go	NOW	$22	Panzer Leader	NOW	$23	Sherlock Holmes	NOW	$20
ASL Solo Rules	NOW	$29	Grand Prix	NOW	$19	Quebec 1759	NOW	$22	Space Chess 3D	NOW	$35
Adv Squad Leader	NOW	$38	Great War at Sea 1	NOW	$32	Rebel & Redcoat 1	NOW	$25	Space Hulk	NOW	$65
Age of Renaissance	NOW	$42	Hannibal	NOW	$32	Regatta	NOW	$19	Star Fleet Battles	NOW	$25
Axis & Allies	NOW	$35	History of the Wrld	NOW	$27	Republic of Rome	NOW	$29	Starship Troopers	NOW	$25
Battletech	NOW	$21	Hobbit Adventure	NOW	$29	Richtofen's War	NOW	$19	Texas Revolution	NOW	$18
Car Wars Deluxe	NOW	$21	Jena	NOW	$38	Rise of Luftwaffe	NOW	$19	Third Reich	NOW	$19
Civilization	NOW	$29	Knightmare Chess	NOW	$13	Risk	NOW	$27	Titan: The Arena	NOW	$17
Colonial Diplomacy	NOW	$42	Kreg!	NOW	$32	Robo Rally	NOW	$33	Warhammer 40K	NOW	$65
Crisis Sinai 1973	NOW	$25	Lionheart	NOW	$35	Sam Grant	NOW	$39	Warhammr Fantsy	NOW	$65
Deluxe Diplomacy	NOW	$42	Lunch Money	NOW	$16	Samurai Swords	NOW	$35	We the People	NOW	$29
Die Hanse Limited	NOW	$39	Necromunda	NOW	$65	Scrabble Dlx	NOW	$39	World War One	NOW	$11
Empire Builder	NOW	$25	Pacific War	NOW	$37	Settler Catan Exp	NOW	$28	Wrld in Flame Dlx	NOW	$90

ROLE PLAYING GAMES

AD&D DM Guide	NOW	$26	Cyberpunk 2020	NOW	$17	Earthdawn	NOW	$18	Palladium Fantasy	NOW	$20
AD&D Monstr Manl	NOW	$20	Deadlands	NOW	$22	Earthdawn Comp	NOW	$15	Robotech	NOW	$11
AD&D Player Bk	NOW	$26	DL Book o' Dead	NOW	$14	GURPS Rulebook	NOW	$20	Shadowrun	NOW	$20
Ars Magica	NOW	$26	DLGreat Rail Wars	NOW	$39	GURPS Mecha	NOW	$15	StarWars Revised	NOW	$25
Call of Cthulhu	NOW	$18	DL Marshal Law	NOW	$13	Heavy Gear	NOW	$25	Traveller	NOW	$24
Cthulhu Live	NOW	$15	DL Night Train	NOW	$4	Heroes Unlimited	NOW	$18	Vampire	NOW	$24
Champions	NOW	$22	DL Quick & Dead	NOW	$21	Mechwarrior	NOW	$13	Warhammr Fantsy	NOW	$19
Conspiracy X	NOW	$20	Dragnlnce 5th Age	NOW	$21	Nightspawn	NOW	$16	Witchcraft	NOW	$20

COMPUTER GAMES: ROLE PLAYING

Arena Deluxe	NOW	$47	Final Fantasy VII	04/98	$48
Baldur's Gate	NOW	$45	Forsaken	01/98	$42
Battlespire	12/97	$49	Lands Lore Grdns Dst	NOW	$48
Betrayal in Antara	NOW	$35	Legcy Kain Bld Omn	NOW	$40
Buccaneer	NOW	$34	Might & Magic 6	04/98	$49
Dark Project	NOW	$49	Might & Magic 6 LE	04/98	$58
Diablo	NOW	$37	Realms of Haunting	NOW	$39
Diablo Hellfire	NOW	$28	Rlms Ark Shdow Riva	NOW	$29
Die By the Sword	01/98	$48	Septerra Core	01/98	$48
Dragon Lore 2	NOW	$39	Shadows of Death	03/98	$43
Dungeon Master 2	NOW	$15	Star Trk Final Unity	NOW	$32
Elder Scrolls 2	NOW	$39	Ultima 7 Series	NOW	$15
Elder Scrls Mrrowind	02/98	$54	Ultima 8 Pagan	NOW	$15
Elric	04/98	$45	Ultima Online	NOW	$53
EverQuest	04/98	$44	Wizardry 8	04/98	$48
FR Descent Undermtn	12/97	$42	Wizardry Gold	NOW	$19

FREE GAME OFFER!

Spend the specified amount on any in stock software and choose a free IBM game from the corresponding list. Request must be made at time of order. Offer good on in stock software only, while supplies last. Valid through February 28,1998.

SPEND $60
Origamo 3.5, Rise of Triad CD, Warlords 5.25, Falcon 3 Mig 29 Add-on 3.5

SPEND $100
Battles of Destiny 3.5, Ravenloft 1&2 Bundle CD, Decathalon CD, Cyberjudas CD

SPEND $200
Great Naval Battles 3&4 CD, Falcon 3.0 3.5, Wolf Hunt or be Hunted CD, Alone in the Dark 3.5

'SIMCITY 3000' Immerse yourself in a total 3D environment with hundreds of new buildings to choose from, full navigational control, and sophisticated microsimulators allowing for detailed control over business and other facilities.
Maxis (Strategy)
Release Date: 3/98 PC CD $54

'POPULOUS:THE THIRD COMING' Large strategies can be planned and enacted from fully playable global view. Various terrain varieties(mountains, oceans, aerial views) impose different challenges on your warriors as you lead them into battle.
Electronic Arts (Strategy)
Release Date: 3/98 PC CD $45

'STARCRAFT' You must gather your resources to accomplish your goals, either freedom or galactic domination. Play 30 different missions in space, on planets, within installations. Scenario and map editor allows you to create your own campaigns.
Blizzard (Strategy)
Release Date: 12/97 PC CD $48

'MYTH' is a tactical level game of fantasy warfare, with unprecedented realism and detail. Seasons change during the course of the game, affecting tactical decisions. Real 3D terrain, dynamic lighting, and tricky artificial intelligence.
Bungie (Strategy)
Release Date: NOW
PC CD

Price Before Rebate $49
Instant Rebate $_5
Price After Rebate $44

'STAR WARS REBELLION' A Star Wars fantasy come true, with 55 characters and real-time play. Strategy portion lets players manage manufacturing, fleet deployment and mission assignments. Innovative real-time 3D tactical component lets players micromanage battle sequences.
Lucasarts (Strategy)
Release Date: 1/98 PC CD $52

'TEX MURPHY:OVERSEER' A riveting script and stellar cast. High color 3D "Virtual World" environment, movie quality 30 fps video, unique characters who respond to your words and actions. Two levels of play, for expert gamers and first-time adventurers.
Access (Adventure)
Release Date: 1/98 PC CD $43

'BLACK DAHLIA' From the creators of *Ripper*, a superb storyline inspired by actual events. A stunningly rendered, amazingly real 3-Dimensional game world that includes over 70 locations on two continents. More than 60 challenging and seamlessly integrated puzzles.
Mindscape (Adventure)
Release Date: 2/98 PC CD $48

'OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS' Once every thousand years, gates open between the waking world and the realms of dream time, offering opportunities to those who dare, to save humanity from extinction. Now is the time to stop catastrophes that could usher in a thousand years of darkness.
Interplay (Adventure)
Release Date: 2/98 PC CD $45

'MYST 2':RIVEN will provide an exploration experience through a new world filled with 7,000 images, over an hour of animation and original music, requiring acute skills of observation.
Broderbund (Adventure)
Release Date: NOW PC CD $46

'MIGHT & MAGIC VI' The Mandate of Heaven, the newest M & M edition contains an integral time clock with multiple plots and story lines. Unique 'skill based' character development and over 1000 miles of virtual terrain!
3DO/New World (Roleplaying)
Release Date: 4/98 PC CD $49

'FALLOUT' It is your challenge to survive, as a person who has grown up in an underground vault. Circumstances force you outside, to a strange world 80 years after the end of modern civilization. A world of mutants, radiation, gangs and violence.
Interplay (Roleplaying)
Release Date: NOW
PC CD

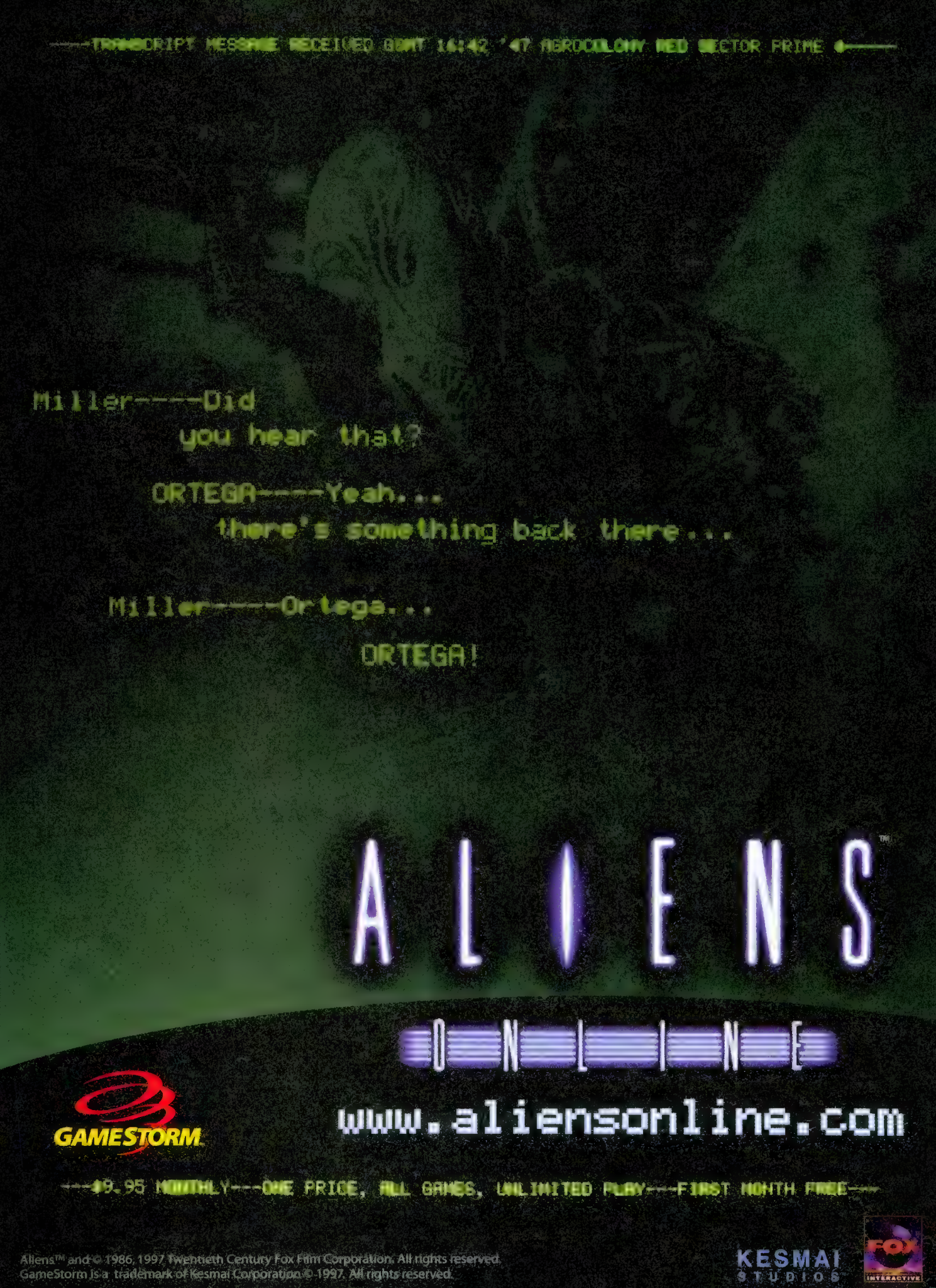
Price Before Rebate $49
Instant Rebate $10
Price After Rebate $39

Visa, MC and Discover accepted Checks held 4 weeks MONEY ORDERS UNDER $200 SAME AS CASH COD $8. Price, availability, offer subject to change at any time. Release schedules and shipping times are approximate not guaranteed and subject to change at any time Hardware orders may require additional shipping and handling charges Defectives replaced with same product All sales final Call for details Shipping and handling charges calculated on a per order, per shipment, and per item basis The "per order" charge is charged once per order placed and the "per item" charge is charged once for each item ordered and the "per shipment" charge is charged once for each shipment we make to you. Each U.S. order will include a 12-issue subscription starting with the Nov 1997 issue (while supplies last) to *Computer Games Strategy Plus* Magazine, for which $10.00 of the order cost will be allocated

	Standard U.S. Mail 7-10 Days	Priority U.S. Mail 2-3 Days	2 Day	Over Night 1 Day	Mail To Canada 4-7 Days	Mail To The World 7-14 Days
Per Order	$1.00	$2.00	$2.00	$2.00	$2.00	$2.00
Per Shipment	$1.25	$1.00	$3.00	$7.00	$2.00	$2.00
Per Item	$0.75	$1.00	$1.00	$2.00	$2.00	$6.00

©1997 CHIPS & BITS INC

SPLUS298P2


TRANSCRIPT MESSAGE RECEIVED GMT 14:42 '47 AGROCOLONY RED SECTOR PRIME
Miller----Did
you hear that?
ORTEGA-----Yeah...
there's something back there...
Miller-----Ortega...
ORTEGA!
ALIENS
ONLINE
GAMESTORM
www.aliensonline.com
$9.95 MONTHLY---ONE PRICE, ALL GAMES, UNLIMITED PLAY---FIRST MONTH FREE
Aliens™ and © 1986, 1997 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved.
GameStorm is a trademark of Kesmai Corporation. © 1997. All rights reserved.
KESMAI
STUDIOS
FOX
INTERACTIVE

The Hangar

"The Laager" makes its first appearance

Sure, this column's been known as "The Hangar" since time immemorial, but it's tempting to just this once rename it "The Laager" because I'm going to talk about tanks, those big hulking beasts that are the focus of our round-up this issue. Notice the games we're covering are solidly in the simulation category (although they do vary as to their degree of realism); games like *Battlezone* and *Uprising* are tank-ish action games that, while tremendously fun in their own light, are not simulations.

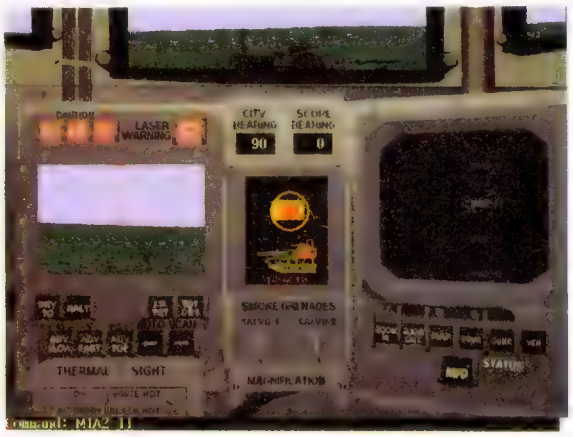
Pundits always point out that the computer gaming industry is cyclical (something any sim fan could tell 'em), and it looks like it's time for tank games to come to the fore again. We've already seen two this year; with four to five new tank games due for '98 [see the feature on pg. 32]. Gamers will be faced with more than perhaps even fans of the genre will want (or can afford). What, then, should you look for in your tank sim? As always, this will depend a lot on the your personal tastes and what kind of experience you're looking for.

As much as you hear of the importance of graphics in flight sims, it's really much more of a critical issue for ground-based sims, especially when you're modeling terrain. In a flight sim you're flying over the ground at generally high speeds; even in ground attack it's not as important to your experience to have nice terrain as it is to the tanker who's sitting down in the middle of said terrain. Strong graphics are important no matter what end of the realism spectrum you're coming from. If you are more into fun gameplay, you want the graphics to be really sharp – they help set the feeling, immerse you in the fun, and they're just plain cool. If you are looking for realism, high-fidelity graphics are critical for portraying the varied elements of armored conflict: can you see the details you need on that potential target two kilometers away? Does the terrain allow you to assume hull-down positions, or realistically hide targets on an otherwise flat looking landscape (it's amazing what a little ripple can do)? Most importantly, perhaps, is there vegetation in which you could set up an ambush or where one may be lying in wait? (This is particularly critical for sims set in the Western Front during WW II, where lots of armored fighting occurred in country normally considered tank-unfriendly).

Realism is something that's really a matter of preference. If you want something that's not hard-core, something where you can just get in and drive and shoot, try to find out the game's control scheme. You'll want something with a minimum of buttons to learn, probably something that simplifies the weapons and ammo types, and maybe something where you don't have to worry about controlling other tanks directly. A sim in this category should probably let you drive and shoot from any position, including outside the tank (*Armored Fist 2* did a pretty good job of this). Communications with the other tanks in your platoon should be very simple (and probably more effective than they would be in reality, especially for WW II tanks), with few commands. Ideally, any hard-core game would give you options to implement many or most of these "for fun" modes.

If you want realism, however, you'll want to look for something that gives you accurate representations of tank systems, weapons, and performance. Few sims have gone "all the way" on realism (I've not seen one that models tanks throwing a track, or even rolling if they attempt a slope that's too steep), but you can get pretty close. All sims will make some unrealistic compromises to help balance out the lack of situational awareness a real tank commander has; until we get true virtual reality equipment (or Thrustmaster comes out with a full tank "cockpit" setup…), this will likely remain true.

The last thing to consider is how much of a "wargame" you want layered on top of your sim; *Armored Fist 2* went light on the larger aspects of a firefight, choosing instead to focus on the sim, while *Abrams* had a healthy dose of what was almost a real-time tactical wargame; while I like what *Abrams* did, this can be taken too far – the infamous *Across the Rhine*, for example, was more wargame than sim. *–Scott Udell*



[top to bottom]

I-Magic's iM1A2 Abrams' graphics don't satisfy either the casual sim player, who want eye-candy and better immersion, nor the hard-core tank sim fan, who feel the engine, which lacked much vegetation, can't accurately recreate many tactical situations

NovaLogic's Armored Fist 2 satisfies the casual gamer looking for a good looking game, but it's wildly exaggerated elevations and lack of serious vegetation knocks it down a notch or two for the more serious tank gamer

"Groundbreaking gaming at its best: fast, challenging, and beautiful. It's beyond recommended."

"★★★★★" – Next Generation

"An innovative blend of action and strategy."

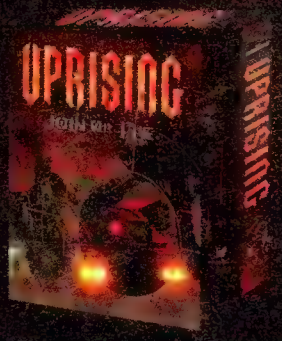
– PC Gamer

"This game is a winner; Go buy it!"

– Adrenaline Vault

JOIN OR DIE.™

WWW.3DO.COM



IN STORES NOW!

CYCLONE STUDIOS

3DFX VERSION INCLUDED

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD-ROM

Uprising, 3DO, Cyclone Studios and 3DO and Cyclone Studios logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of The 3DO Company. © 1997 The 3DO Company. All rights reserved.

UPRISING™

ACTUAL GAMEPLAY

Are you ready for total war immersion?

Longbow 2

The king is dead... long live the king!

There is little question that *Longbow 2* has been one of the most highly anticipated flight simulations this year. The prospect of coupling the solid flight model and avionics of the original *Longbow* with improvements to almost every other aspect of gameplay appeared to be a sure recipe for success, but sometimes an abundance of hype can raise expectations too high. When gamers begin to hope for more than is realistically possible from a game, even worthwhile efforts can backfire in a dramatic fashion. It is perhaps for this reason more than anything else that this sequel is as impressive as it is – it stands out despite the hype that has surrounded its development. Not since *Gunship 2000* has a rotary-wing simulation been as ambitious... and as much fun.

The one word that best describes the experience of playing *Longbow 2* is "detail." Already working with a winning flight model, the designers have focused their attention on all of the peripheral elements of gameplay, and they have done so with a rigorous attention to even the smallest detail. The first thing that the player is likely to notice is the option to fly several new helicopters. In addition to the AH-64D Longbow Apache, players can opt to pilot the UH-60A/L Blackhawk or the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. Each helicopter incorporates its own avionics (the analog gauges take some getting used to after the luxury of the Longbow's IHADSS display), and each displays a satisfyingly unique set of flight characteristics. The Blackhawk is fast and powerful, but its massive bulk makes it more difficult to maneuver. The Kiowa is relatively light and nimble, but has neither the speed nor the power of either the Longbow or the Blackhawk.

As can be expected, the new helicopters expand the roles that the player can perform in the game's missions. With the Blackhawk, the player can finally play the other side of the coin in escort missions. More easily detectable by radar and more lightly armored than the Longbow, it can be quite a rush to fly in low over a hostile landing zone to deliver a load of troops to the front lines. The Blackhawk is armed only with a pair of door guns, used primarily for clearing landing zones and providing supporting fire once the troops are on the ground. The player can jump into either of the door gunners' positions and manually aim the guns, but the difficulty of trying to aim while keeping the helicopter aloft (and alive) makes it more practical to allow the AI gunner to do the aiming for you. While in the cockpit view, your gunner will aim at any target of opportunity (it is still up to the player to pull the trigger to make him fire).

The Kiowa can carry more armaments than the Blackhawk, though still only a fraction of the loadout that the Longbow can bear. Hellfires, rockets, Stingers, and gun pods can be mounted on the Kiowa's outriggers, but the weapons are hard-mounted and must be manually aimed at any target (by pointing the helicopter in the appropriate direction). It is better than no protection at all, but the Kiowa does not even approach the Longbow in terms of combat ability. That makes sense, since the Kiowa's primary mission is reconnaissance. To that end, it is equipped with a mast-mounted TADS camera capable of surveying a 170-degree arc to either side of the helicopter. With this setup the Kiowa can identify targets with the TADS while remaining concealed behind a ridgeline (a sensible approach, since the Kiowa's best defense is to avoid detection). The biggest drawback is the lack of an option to view the Kiowa's TADS MFD as a full-screen display – identifying targets on the tiny cockpit MFD can be a little tricky, even at maximum zoom levels. Ultimately, the Kiowa and the Blackhawk add a welcome new element to gameplay despite these small drawbacks.

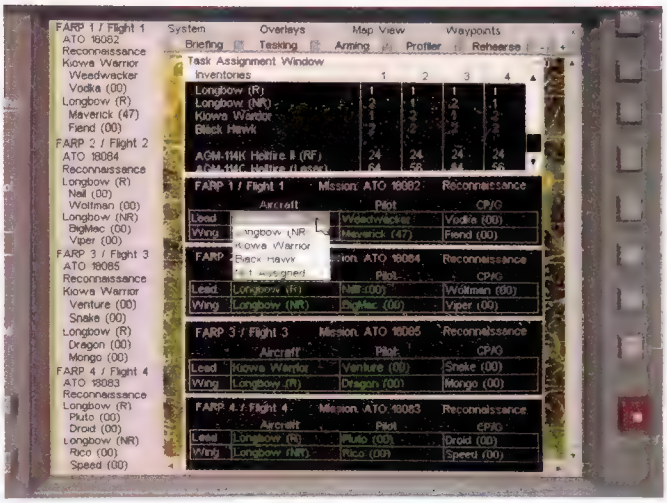
The second thing the player is likely to notice is that the campaign engine has been totally revamped. Replacing the branching scripted missions of the original *Longbow* are two dynamic campaigns – one a series of combat exercises at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California; the other a face-off with Iran over the oil fields of Azerbaijan. Each campaign consists of a series of missions that are generated based on the play-

[clockwise from top]

Introducing the star of the show...

The OH-58D Kiowa Warrior is primarily a recon helicopter

The UH-60A/L Blackhawk has little in the way of weapons, but it can crank out the speed!



[clockwise from left]

The new mission planner offers everything but the kitchen sink

The player assigns pilots and helicopters via the tasking window

It is sometimes useful to arm your helicopters before departing on your mission

er's performance in past missions and the state of the ground war. When a certain state of readiness is achieved, the player's ground forces will attempt to advance the front lines. The player works to support these advances by maintaining supply lines and by providing intelligence and direct support to the ground forces.

Supporting this new campaign engine is a revised and vastly more detailed mission planner. Aside from providing more detailed map information, the mission planner allows the player to select the helicopters, loadouts, and routes for four flights of two helicopters each. While the computer generates default tasking for all of the flights, the player will want review things before playing the mission. The AI pilots tend to follow their waypoints religiously, even if their route takes them directly over enemy air defenses (which the default routes often do). The player can fine-tune the timing of a given mission by giving AI pilots orders to wait at a given waypoint for a specific amount of time, and then run an animated "rehearsal" of the mission to make sure that the timing is correct.

This planning pays off in the long run, because keeping the AI pilots alive is critical to success. The forward-area refueling points (FARPs) are stocked with limited helicopters and armaments, and running low on supplies can put a major dent in any offensive effort. The player may feel more comfortable flying in the heavily armed Longbow, but every mission a Longbow flies represents an opportunity for that Longbow to be lost.

In addition to the strategic element that the dynamic campaign adds to gameplay is a greater sense of immersion within the missions themselves. Other ground and air units maneuver with more coherence and purpose than they did in the original *Longbow*, and at times the battle raging on the ground is almost as interesting as the one you are waging in the air. The feeling that there is a war going on around the player – a war in which the player is only a small part of a greater effort – makes for a very believable environment.

One of the most prominent items on gamers' wish lists was multiplayer support, and *Longbow 2* scores a "success +" with that feature as well. Two to four players can play over LAN, TCP/IP, modem, or serial connection in a variety of different arrangements. Deathmatch play is available, but cooperative play is a lot more fun (air-to-air combat in a helicopter tends to be less interesting than one might expect). In cooperative missions, players can each lead their own flight, fly as wingmen, and even operate different positions in the same helicopter. Players have the option of engaging in single or campaign missions (using either of the game's two theaters of operations). Players can jump into a campaign that was originally started as a single-player campaign, or they can start a new campaign from scratch. Playing a campaign with human players on your wing is an immensely satisfying experience, though it is likely to take a good bit of time (and schedule wrangling between players) to play through to the end. Fortunately, any player other than the host can leave or join the campaign at any point in its progress.

Considering how complex and thorough this game is, there are surprisingly few nits to pick. The radio chatter, while improved over that of the original game, can be difficult to follow when it is coming from several different flights of helicopters. The promotional videos from *Longbow* are missing, and there is no flight recorder feature.

The game's graphics are as impressive as its other features, and it supports 3D acceleration via the Glide API for 3Dfx-based cards. The terrain is impressive, sporting a greater number of polygons than the original *Longbow* as well as some gorgeous texture maps. The models of the friendly helicopters show a particular attention to detail, as is evidenced by the coning of the rotor blades and the way the pilot and co-pilot/gunner turn their heads to follow their targets in the transparent cockpits. Other graphical enhancements include transparent smoke and some very impressive light-source shading (which can make for jaw-dropping pyrotechnic displays during night missions). Each helicopter has its own virtual cockpit as well, complete with functional MFDs (but without functional gauges, alas), allowing the player to slew his view around freely. The feature is less useful here than it would be in a jet simulation… but it does look cool.

Longbow 2 isn't perfect (no game is), but it is the most detailed rotary-wing flight simulation available, and possibly the best simulation of any kind this year. *–Benjamin E. Sones*

★★★★★

Longbow 2

Origin • www.janes.ea.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 133MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, Internet, LAN, modem, null-modem

Sabre Ace

Good game, poor sim

[top to bottom]

Preparing to knock out a bridge in downtown Seoul

Training is conducted in an easy-to-control trainer aircraft

Your instructor provides advice from the back seat

How important is the fidelity of the flight simulation to your enjoyment of a flight sim? Can you enjoy a game that features air combat if the planes don't fly like the real thing? *Sabre Ace*, Virgin's game covering the air war in the Korean conflict, puts your answers to these questions to the test. Players requiring a hard core flight model should leave this one on the shelf. On the other hand, folks looking for a good game involving air combat during the Korean war, and most importantly who don't mind an arcade treatment of the flight model, may find much to like here.

It's not immediately clear who this game is aimed at: the box art claims *Sabre Ace* is "Tested by actual Korean War veterans for the ultimate in realism," implying an accurate flight sim. But once you climb into the cockpit, it becomes clear the target gamer is the casual player, the pilot who thinks energy management is something relating to gas mileage. While the game allows you to fly for the U.S. in the F-51 Mustang, F-80, and F-86, and the Soviets in the YAK-9 and the MiG-15, all of the planes exhibit extremely simplified flight characteristics. There is no airspeed bleed in turns, it appears nearly impossible to stall any of the planes, and the thrust-to-weight ratios all appear to be closer to an F-16 than to Korean era aircraft. Energy management, the key to survival in real dogfights, is mostly irrelevant here. Is the enemy at a higher altitude? No problem, just point your nose at the sky and crank up the throttle.

So, accepting that this isn't *Falcon 4.0*, how is it as a game? Pretty good, actually. *Sabre Ace* opens with an extremely well-done training mode, in which you can fly as either a U.S. or Soviet pilot in forgiving trainer aircraft. The training is progressive, with an instructor pilot talking the player through the exercises. As the player demonstrates increasing proficiency, he graduates to better aircraft. This module is both effective and enjoyable.

The campaigns are playable from either side of the conflict and consist of a set of canned missions. While not providing the replay value of a dynamic campaign, the missions are well designed and provide a very good feel for the represented era.

Microphone chatter is authentic sounding and adds to the atmosphere. The graphics (reviewed here using a 3Dfx board) are very good, particularly when attacking targets located in cities. As you play through the campaigns, success is rewarded with both increased responsibility, such as moving from wingman to flight leader status, and with more advanced aircraft, moving from props to jets. In addition, flying as the U.S. side has a fundamentally different feel from flying as a Soviet pilot, reflected in both the mission types and styles of your flight leaders.

Air to ground strike missions aren't overly affected by the arcadish flight modeling, but dogfighting is another matter entirely. The lack of stalls and airspeed bleed results in very ahistorical tactics, with little need to do more than point the plane in the direction you want to go and push the throttle to the wall. For the casual player, this may be a bonus; however, it would have been nice to have the choice of an optional higher fidelity mode for more advanced players. In addition, the computer pilots don't seem to be much of a threat – one is much more likely to be damaged by flak or accidentally flying into a hillside than to be shot down by an enemy pilot. Perhaps this is also a nod to the casual player with little experience in more sophisticated flight sims.

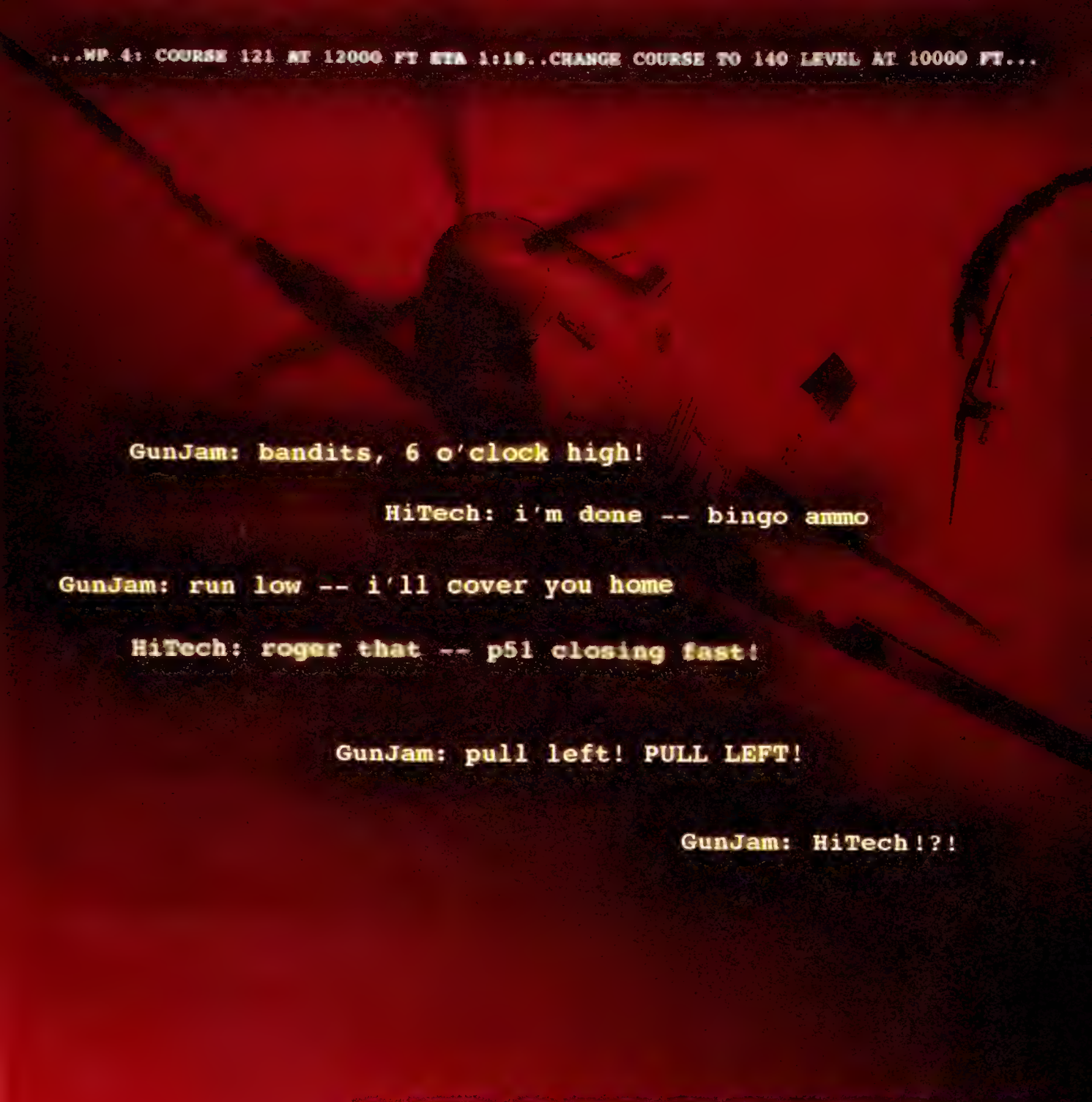
One drawback that is frustrating to novices and experts alike: the viewing system. *Sabre Ace* provides several fixed views out of the cockpit; the problem comes from the fact that the views not only don't overlap, there are large gaps between the views. In other words, you are faced with a significant number of blind spots. While occasionally not being able to see your wingmen is annoying, not being able to find an enemy in a dogfight is unacceptable.

What's the verdict on *Sabre Ace*? Tough call. The viewing system and simple flight characteristics rule this out as a serious flight sim, but the largely ignored topic (the Korean War), the innovative training system, and the interesting missions, playable from both sides, make this a good game for the casual player. Just be prepared to re-learn how to fly when you move on to more realistic sims. *–Jeff Lackey*

★★★½☆

Sabre Ace

Virgin Interactive • www.vie.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 133MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, LAN, modem, serial


...WP 4: COURSE 121 AT 12000 FT ETA 1:10..CHANGE COURSE TO 140 LEVEL AT 10000 FT...
GunJam: bandits, 6 o'clock high!
HiTech: i'm done -- bingo ammo
GunJam: run low -- i'll cover you home
HiTech: roger that -- p51 closing fast!
GunJam: pull left! PULL LEFT!
GunJam: HiTech!?!

AIR WARRIOR II

www.airwarrior.com

GAMESTORM

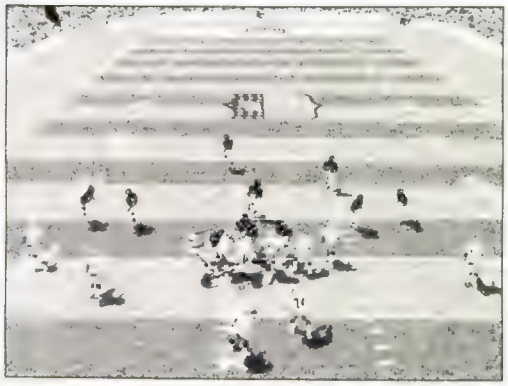
---$9.95 MONTHLY--ONE PRICE, ALL GAMES, UNLIMITED PLAY--FIRST MONTH FREE---

Air Warrior is a registered trademark of Kesmai Corporation.
GameStorm is a trademark of Kesmai Corporation. © 1997. All rights reserved.

KESMAI STUDIOS

Madden NFL 98

Lobotomized for your sporting pleasure



The legendary Heath Schuler drops back to pass

The "Madden University" offers plenty of advice for football beginners

The "Hail Mary" will get 'em every time

Over the years, the Madden name has been synonymous with high-quality football games. First appearing on the Sega Genesis, its move into the modern 32-bit world has been less-than-successful. It missed an entire year (1996), and *Madden 97* was merely serviceable. Despite this, the anticipation level for every *Madden* installment is sky-high, and a cursory glance at the features of *Madden NFL 98* gave us all plenty of hope that *this is the one*, the one that restores it to past glories. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

Actually, that's an understatement. Nothing can prepare you for what has happened to *Madden 98*. It has a lot in common with Accolade's *Legends 98* [*CGS+ 85, pg. 221*], bettering it in aesthetics and its ability to produce credible simulated statistics but sharing most of that game's fatal flaws.

The most inexcusable flaw is *Madden 98*'s non-existent computer opponent. The game's new technology, dubbed Liquid AI™, is supposedly adapted from authentic NFL playbooks and schemes and theoretically adjusts itself on the fly based on a player's playcalling. In action, it doesn't work. Period.

What are you supposed to think of a game where playing games on the hardest "All-Madden" skill level generates "credible" scores like a 172-101 victory (human Raiders vs. CPU Broncos)? Where Jeff George throws for 1600 yards with 22 touchdown passes (19 to James Jett alone) *in one game* by running *the same play the entire game* ("Hail Mary")? What about a game where running backs typically average *negative* yards/carry because they can rarely make it out of the backfield? Finally, how about a 83-48 victory (human Saints vs. CPU "All-Madden" team, 10 minute quarters) where a new indefensible play ("Play Action") is substituted for the previous indefensible play ("Hail Mary") and Heath Schuler (stop giggling) throws for 900 yards and 11 touchdowns?

How about a game that calls a running play in a 4th and 16 situation on its own 20 yard line with two minutes left in a 52-47 game? Where the best strategy for defending kick-offs is to angle your kick toward the sidelines and run a defensive player out-of-bounds, avoiding all blockers to successfully tackle the kick-returner (in the NFL, you cannot voluntarily leave the field and return to make a play)? What about play results with useful information like "Touchdown. First & Goal from the 8" but that don't tell you how many yards your punt traveled? Or one where you can only view your opponent's statistics at the end of a game by switching human control to that team on the post-game screen?

There is a feeling of the product being rushed. The play-by-play is poorly implemented, with the volume levels varying wildly on plays. The pre-game show, which looks fabulous in its MPEG splendor, features useless information (Madden says the Raiders have a weak offense – this is wrong in reality as well as in the context of the game, where they were averaging over 100 points/game). Viewing statistics is a chore – memo to companies: grab a newspaper, check out the sports pages and display your basic stats in that format. Finally, there's no promised play editor or Internet play and the game installs a zillion tiny files in a directory structure that generates "DOS path length" errors if you run Scandisk on the installed drive. It may also set a record for taking the longest time ever to uninstall.

All of these problems destroy the things *Madden 98* gets right. These range from the superb-looking stadiums, a faster frame rate in Windows 95 than last year's DOS version, excellent sprite-based player animations, a wonderful dynamic camera that keeps all players on-screen at all times (something all other football games should emulate) and near-perfect controls (its only flaw, and it's a serious one, is that you can't have more than three eligible receivers).

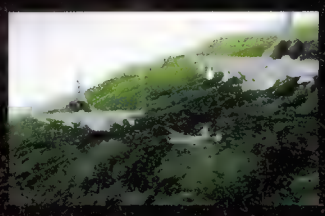
It seems like a broken record. *Madden 98* is yet another sports game that looks good but features gameplay that can be ripped to shreds after one or two games. This brings into question the policy of releasing a new game every year. Is it worth it to rush out a product that destroys the valuable name of a series? The best thing you can say about *Madden 98* is that it's lowered our expectations for future installments of this once venerable series. *–Steve Bauman*

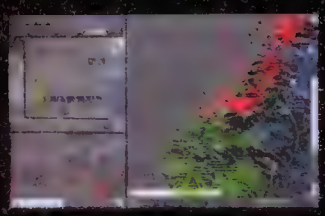
Madden NFL 98
EA Sports • www.easports.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 133MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2 players, LAN, modem, serial

WHAT DOES "MERCY" SOUND LIKE IN RUSSIAN?

Introducing EF2000 V2.0.
The world's best flight sim just got a whole lot better.

PC Gamer says that EF2000 has "everything you could hope for in a high-tech flight sim: realism, playability and stellar graphics." That's why they named it Editor's Choice. It's also why it was named 1996 Sim of the Year by Computer Gaming World. But we knew you wanted more. And EF2000 V2.0 delivers.





Russia has invaded Norway, and it's up to you and NATO's next-generation EF2000 fighter to stop them. Fully compatible with Windows 95 and 3Dfx and Rendition accelerators, V2.0's incredible detail brings combat to life, and death. Follow the tactical mission planner and dive into one of 16 different combat scenarios. Or go up against true flesh and blood via multi-player or head-to-head network play. And if that's not enough, construct your own air-to-air combat against 32 different aircraft so you can prove once and for all who's the best.

EF2000 V2.0. It's not a sequel, it's reality.

www.did.com

ocean
INFOGRAMES

© 1997 Ocean of America, Inc. Ocean is a registered trademark of Ocean Software Limited. Game Program © 1996 Digital Image Design. Designed and developed by Digital Image Design Ltd. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Windows and Windows logo are registered trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation.

THE MOST REALISTIC SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTOR SIMULATION CREATED FOR THE PC

SAR

SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER FLIGHT SIM

Visit your local Retailer
or
Contact us:
www.intense-game.com
or
Call: 1-888-240-6172

1997 copyright by Interactivision

Distributed by

Intense Entertainment

NHL PowerPlay 98

A couple of problems short of greatness

True hockey enthusiasts, the folks who actually understand the icing rules, have been frustrated for quite some time in their eternal search for a real hockey simulator. Not an arcade game, with flashy graphics and sound and a slight resemblance to true hockey, but a game that looks and plays like the real thing. Virgin's *NHL PowerPlay 96* has come as close as anything in the last few years to filling this need, so it was with bated breath that NHL fans awaited the release of *PowerPlay 98*.

Positioned as a hockey simulation, *PowerPlay 98* doesn't completely ignore the eye and ear candy. The graphics and sound effects are well done, although not up to the astounding level of *NHL 98* (but then, few things this side of Spielberg are). The game supports all 3D accelerator cards that utilize Direct3D, and the gameplay is smooth. The sounds of a hockey game, the rink announcer (there is no color commentator), the crowd, the skates, shots, hits, etc. are all believable. The player animation is well done, and the movement of the goalies is the best of any hockey game: the puck doesn't just mysteriously end up in the goalie's glove, he dives, stretches, butterflies, kicks, etc. in appropriate response to the shot. The rinks themselves are fine though generic, the only differences being the logos on the ice.

The view of the ice and players, however, is where the first significant problem rears its head: there's no satisfactory view which allows the player to see enough of the ice to make good, strategic plays. The player may often find himself passing over to an unseen section of the ice, hoping a friendly player is there; to the credit of the game's AI, a teammate is usually where he should be. What is desperately needed is a view that is zoomed out just a bit from the available settings.

Where *PowerPlay 98* excels is in the gameplay. The players move and behave like true NHL players, resulting in the look and feel, the ebb and flow, of real NHL hockey. The players appear to play like their real life counterparts. Statistics, including shot totals (using 10 minute periods), are what you would expect from a true hockey simulation. The puck behaves the way it should, and goals don't feel like the result of a random number generator; they are usually the result of a good play and thus have a satisfying feel. There have been reports of the computer being too easy to score on, but that was not reproducible during this review, with results of about one to five goals from about 30-40 shots per game.

However, goal scoring is the subject of the most significant flaw in *PowerPlay 98*: the computer can't score. There are no "difficulty levels" in the game, and at the level the computer plays, it just flat cannot put the puck in the net. About the only time the computer scores is if the human player does something dumb, such as accidentally moving the goalie out too far. Five on three powerplays strike no fear in the heart of the human, nor do computer breakaways, as the computer player will almost never find a way to get the goal. It's a serious flaw, as the player soon gets tired of winning every game due to this computer deficiency.

Another annoying shortcoming in *PowerPlay 98*, although not directly affecting gameplay, is in the instant replay system. The controls are intuitive and flexible; however, only about three seconds of gameplay is recorded. Unless you hit the "instant replay" button *immediately* after scoring, you'll be deprived of the pleasure of watching your player make the shot.

A couple more small bugs popped up during play (goalie not getting back to the goal quickly enough after a delayed penalty, occasional skipping of the "three stars" presentation), but overall the game is very solid. Roster management, coaching strategies, season and league stats, all work as advertised.

In the end, *PowerPlay 98* is the only hockey game currently on the market that actually plays like a hockey simulation. This is a game aimed squarely at the hockey enthusiast, and its gameplay is generally excellent. Hopefully Virgin will address the problems mentioned, because a few flaws, and in particular the computer's inability to score, make this game a patch away from being the hockey sim fanatics are searching for. *–Jeff Lackey*

[top to bottom]

Kozlov shoots past a sliding Chicago defender

The goaltender animations are outstanding

Kocur is separated from the puck

★★★☆☆

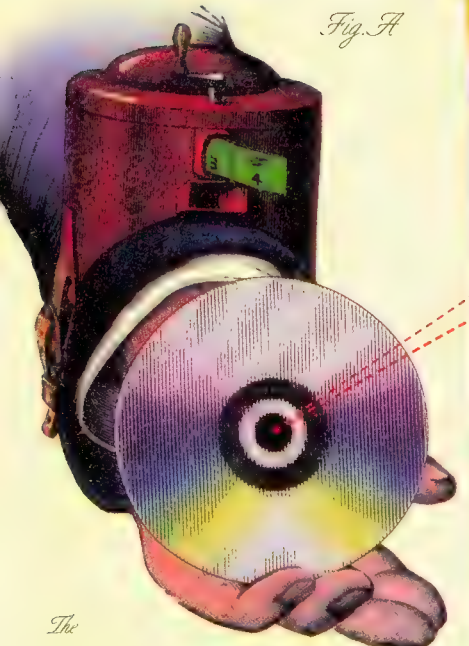
NHL PowerPlay 98

Virgin Interactive • www.vie.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 4X CD-ROM; 2D mode, 486 DX2/66, 8MB of RAM; 3D mode, 133MHz Pentium, 3D accelerator • Multiplayer: 2-6 players, same computer

Enjoy The Latest & Best Games!

A truly fascinating entertainment, suitable for both sexes, YOUNG & OLD, played in the parlors of the sophisticated capitals of Europe and Amer...

Fig. A



The Computer Games Strategy Plus Demo Disk!

Fabulous! Never before seen! Unparalleled in the history of the computational arts! Filled with the most breathtakingly exciting demonstrations of the game-maker's art you are likely to find, even if you should travel from the frigid wastelands of the tundra to the verdant equatorial splendor of the cannibal isles!

Missing Something?

Many of our subscribers have not ordered the CD-rom with their subscriptions. You could be one of them. You could be missing **GREAT DEMOS & FREE GAMES.** Do something about it. Upgrade your current subscription and begin receiving the **CD-rom** for only **$1 more** per issue.

Call Customer service at **1.800.283.3542**

TO ANY reader of this journal who has through sloth, negligence, or temporary state of impecuniousity not chosen to receive the CD-rom with their subscription, we graciously indulge them with this kind offer:

YOU MAY now for the mere sum of $1 additional have it delivered to your door, rain or shine, anywhere in these United States of America. Call **1.800.283.3542** and have these CDs arrive in the neat and tidy packages that such a **SUPERIOR PRODUCT** warrants!

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

Even better with CD-rom

The Ultimate Off-Road Vehicle
TEST DRIVE IT NOW!
playable demo at
www.novalogic.com
ARMORED FIST 2
M1A2 ABRAMS
From NovaLogic, the company that brought you the best-selling combat simulations F-22 Lightning II and Comanche 3.
© 1997 NovaLogic, Inc.
NOVALOGIC - THE ART OF WAR
TEEN
AGES 13+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

SODA Off-Road Racing

Proof that getting down and dirty in the mud is rarely pretty

A serious simulation of off-road racing, *SODA Off-Road Racing* is as far removed from a game like *Sega Rally* as *NASCAR Racing 2* is from *Daytona USA*. Compared to the other products created under the Papyrus name (from the classic *Indianapolis 500* to the, well, classic *NASCAR Racing 2*), *SODA* is uncharacteristically bland and generic. They've done their best (or worst) to mask the simulators' excellence by putting it in a wrapper that commits the sin of being both slow and ugly.

SODA stands for the Short-Course Off-Road Drivers Association, an organization that sponsors a series of races popular throughout the Midwestern USA. *SODA*, the game, simulates three different vehicles, a two-wheel and four-wheel drive truck and a two-wheel drive buggy; all are simple to drive but difficult to drive quickly, providing a unique challenge for any hardcore race fan.

Overall, the feeling of being on the edge of adhesion (and disaster) is well simulated. The vehicles slip and slide through turns, and the high-horsepower trucks tend to spin when too much throttle is applied. The game gives you an incredible sense of accomplishment when you finally master the delicate art of throwing your vehicle into a power-slide while controlling the turn with the throttle and some opposite-lock steering.

The game supports a career mode, single races and network play for up to six. You can race on any of the included 12 tracks or use the well-documented track designer to create your own. While the tracks have a somewhat generic feel imposed on them by the editor, the plusses of this feature far outweigh any negatives. Simple to use, it should extend the game's life as gamers scramble to create the most interesting tracks their brains can dream up. Another well-implemented feature is a utility that allows you to, with a single click, upload and download lap times to a central server. This allows you to show off your prowess in a single-player game and compare your times with those throughout the world. Watch out for those Europeans – they take their racing seriously.

Unfortunately, your first thoughts about the game won't be directed at the simulation or the slick add-on features. Instead, you'll look at the visuals and say, "Ick." The game only offers support for 3D accelerator cards based on the Rendition chipset. Big mistake. Without acceleration the terrain is homely, and the frame rates with all detail enabled are abysmal on almost all machines. A 133MHz Pentium requires a drop to 320x240 resolution with no texturing to maintain 20FPS, while a 266MHz Pentium constantly drops textures when running at 640x480. If you're not using a Rendition card, you'll just have to live with the fact you're going to see a lot of untextured polygonal objects on all of the tracks.

However, those vehicles, textured or not, look fabulous, with articulated suspension bits drooping and sagging as you bound over hills and accelerate through turns. The trucks and buggies look good because developer Software Allies elected to use a large number of polygons to make up each vehicle, so limiting the number of them per race has an enormous impact on frame rate. Oddly enough, once you're actually immersed in the simulation, your own imagination will texture all of those ugly polygons (and without a frame-rate hit – imagine that). You're too busy concentrating on the business of driving to be too concerned with sightseeing.

A patch for 3Dfx cards is being worked on, but was not ready in time for this review. Without the patch, it's difficult to recommend *SODA* to anyone other than the people still using Rendition 3D cards – both of you (just kidding – many race fans have the cards because of the card's support in *NASCAR Racing 2*). Though it's unlikely to satisfy people interested in the visual kick of a game like *NASCAR Racing 2*, the actual simulation in *SODA* is worthy of the Papyrus name. The vehicle physics feel "right" (at least compared to driving a "real" truck or buggy on ice and snow), the track editor is practically worth the price of admission and the World Wide Ranking is a feature whose time has come. It's a decidedly mixed bag of a game, but for hardcore race fans, it's worth sorting through. *–Steve Bauman*

[top to bottom]

Getting some air on a hill. Without an accelerator, the high-resolution graphics look OK, but unless you're running a Pentium II, the game will likely look like...

...this polygonal treat from the land of VGA. Hey, this looks like Papyrus' own Indianapolis 500 sim, circa 1989...

The existence of a track editor should give the game plenty of legs

★★★☆☆

SODA Off-Road Racing

Sierra • www.sierra.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium or higher, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-6 players, Internet, LAN, modem, serial

THE GREAT $4.95 CD-ROM DEAL

Great New Selections To Choose From!

Command And Conquer: Red Alert 5105101
Strategy Game, DOS, Pentium

WinDelete '97 5132204
Utilities

Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia '98 5126800
General Reference, WC Pentium

Links LS 1998 Edition 5121782
Sports, Pent90, 16mb

Blood 5115100
Arcade Style, DOS, 16mb, J

WarCraft Battle Chest 5123807
Strategy Game, DOS

CHOOSE ANY 2 CD-ROMs FOR $4.95 EA.

PLUS 1 MORE AT GREAT SAVINGS! (See details below.)

Command & Conquer 5050208
Strategy Game, DOS

Lords Of The Realm II 5102108
Strategy Game, DOS

Quake 5097902
Arcade Style, DOS, Pentium

NEW **Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea** 5132501
Flight Simulation, Pent133, 16mb

NEW **Aces Collection Series** 5132600
Flight Simulation, DOS, 16mb

Shadow Warrior 5118906
Arcade Style, DOS, Pentium, 16mb

The Oregon Trail II 5078308
Children's Ed., WC

Net Accelerator 5120605
Utilities

Hoyle Classic Games 5053202
Strategy Game, WC

Resume Maker Deluxe CD 5050703
Home/Personal, WC, P

NEW **You Don't Know Jack: XXL** 5126909
Strategy Game, WC

NEW **You Don't Know Jack: Sports** 5127105
Strategy Game, WC

NEW **You Don't Know Jack: Movies** 5127006
Strategy Game, WC

NEW **King's Quest Collection Series** 5127204
Adventure, DOS

Zork: Legacy Collection 5114004
Adventure, DOS

Leisure Suit Larry Collection 5116009
Adventure, DOS

NEW **3D Visual Home** 5129705
Home/Personal, WC, 16mb

How To Buy Mutual Funds 5119607
Home/Personal, WC

Mechwarrior 2 Mercenaries 5091905
Arcade Style, DOS

Mechwarrior 2: Battle Pack 5108501
Arcade Style, Pentium, 16mb, J

The Time Warp Of Dr. Brain 5106307
Children's Ed., WC

Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle Of Flesh 5102801
Adventure, Pentium, 12mb

Phantasmagoria 5004502
Interact. Game, DOS

Over 1000 Drinks 5127808
General Interest

3D Ultra Pinball: Creep Night 5088208
Arcade Style, WC

NEW **Dark Reign** 5129200
Strategy Game, Pent90, 16mb

Logic Quest 5110200
Children's Ed., WC, Pentium

Marvel Super Heroes Creativity Center 5127402
Children's Enter., WC, P

Marvel Super Heroes Print Studio: X-Men 5127303
Children's Enter., WC, P

Duke Nukem 3D: Atomic Edition 5105804
Arcade Style, DOS

Twinsen's Odyssey 5123500
Adventure, DOS, Pent90

NEW **Front Page Sports Baseball Pro: '98** 5124904
Sports, Pentium, 16mb

NEW **Outpost 2: Divided Destiny** 5129101
Strategy Game, Pentium, 16mb

Jumpstart Toddlers 5064902
Children's Ed., WC

Jumpstart Pre-K 5091400
Children's Ed., WC

Jumpstart Preschool 5051305
Children's Ed., WC

Jumpstart Kindergarten 5027701
Children's Ed., WC

Jumpstart First Grade 5045901
Children's Ed., WC

NEW **Kindergarten Blaster** 5128400
Children's Ed., WC

NASCAR Racing 2 5104609
Driving Sim., DOS, 16mb

Indycar Racing II 5083308
Driving Sim., DOS

NEW **Curious George ABC Adventure** 5122908
Children's Ed., WC

Interstate '76 5108600
Arcade Style, Pentium, 16mb

Graphics Converter 5120506
Home/Personal, WC

NEW **The American Girls: Premiere** 5130901
Children's Ent., WC

NEW **Master Publisher 97** 5132402
Home/Personal, WC

Oil Change 5097407
Utilities

Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within 5060405
Adventure, WC

NEW **Heavy Gear** 5132709
Arcade Style, Pent100, 16mb

Shivers Two: Harvest Of Souls 5110002
Adventure, WC, 12mb

Caesar II 5068606
Strategy Game, DOS

Mixed Up Mother Goose Deluxe 5042304
Children's Ed

The 7th Guest 5004700
Interact. Game, DOS

The 11th Hour 5054309
Interact. Game, DOS

NEW **Uninstaller** 5126107
Utilities

Print Artist 4.0 5089305
Home/Personal, WC, P

Betrayal In Antara 5116900
Role Playing, DOS, Pentium, 16mb

Police Quest Collection 5115902
Adventure, DOS

NEW **Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain** 5128707
Role Playing, Pent100, 16mb

COLUMBIA HOUSE CD-ROM DIRECT

How To Select CD-ROMs For Your System.

All selections are available for PC only. *Unless otherwise indicated, minimum system requirements are Windows '95 operating system*, a 486/66 processor with 8MB RAM, SVGA display, sound card, 200 MB hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, and keyboard. DOS titles will run in Windows '95 DOS mode. Where indicated, J=Joystick, P=Printer, Pent=Pentium, and WC=Windows '95 Compatible selection.

A whole new way to get the most exciting CD-ROMs – games, reference, edutainment and more – all at great prices! Just write in the selection numbers of the 2 CD-ROMs you want for $4.95 each, plus shipping and handling. In exchange, you agree to buy 4 more CD-ROMs in the next 2 years, at our regular prices (currently as low as $29.95, plus shipping and handling) – and you may cancel membership at any time after doing so. What's more, you can get one more CD-ROM right now for the low price of $19.95 and have less to buy later (see complete details in coupon).

Free CD-ROM magazine sent approximately every 4-6 weeks (up to 13 times a year) reviewing our Featured Selection – plus scores of alternate choices, including many lower priced CD-ROMs. And you may also receive Special Selection mailings up to four times a year. (That's up to 17 buying opportunities a year!)

Buy only what you want! If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing – it will be sent automatically. If you'd prefer an alternative selection, or none at all, just mail the response card always provided by the date specified. You'll always have 14 days to decide; if not, you may return the selection at our expense.

Money-Saving Bonus Plan. If you continue your membership after fulfilling your obligation, you'll be eligible for our generous bonus plan. It enables you to enjoy great savings on the CD-ROMs you want – for as long as you decide to remain a member!

10-Day Risk-Free Trial. We'll send details of how Columbia House CD-ROM Direct works along with your introductory package. If you're not satisfied, return everything within 10 days at our expense for a full refund and no further obligation.

Act now, membership in CD-ROM Direct may be limited.

For faster service, use your credit card and call us toll-free 24 hours a day.

1-800-792-1000 Dept. NJ7

Check us out online! For more titles...to order...or for more information.
http://www.columbiahouse.com/cdrom

Columbia House CD-ROM Direct

Dept. NJ7, 3109 Canterbury Court, Bloomington, IN 47404-1498

Yes, please enroll me under the terms outlined in this advertisement. As a member, I need buy just 4 more CD-ROMs at your regular prices within the next 2 years.

Important! All selections are available for PC only.

Write in the selection #'s below

Send me these 2 CD-ROMs for just $4.95 each plus $1.75 each shipping/handling (total $13.40). # _____ # _____

Buy your first selection now and have less to buy later!

☐ Also send my first selection for $19.95 plus $1.75 shipping/handling which I'm adding to my $13.40 payment (total $35.10). I then need to buy only 3 more (instead of 4) in 2 years. # _____

Please check how paying: ☐ My check is enclosed. (KSY/KS1)

Charge my introductory CD-ROMs and future CD-ROM Direct purchases to. (KSZ/KS2)

☐ MasterCard ☐ Diners Club ☐ AMEX ☐ VISA ☐ Discover

Account Number _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

My main CD-ROM interest is: (check one) (Note: You are always free to choose from any category.)

☐ Entertainment ☐ Education (includes children's titles) ☐ Edutainment ☐ Productivity

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: Columbia House reserves the right to request additional information, to limit membership or reject any application, or to cancel any membership. Offer limited to residents of the contiguous United States. Residents of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S. territories, APO and FPO addresses please write for separate offer. Applicable sales tax added to all orders.

S98-CDR-02G

©1998 The Columbia House Company

NCAA Football 98

You've tried the rest, now try the best

It's been an odd year for football games. New versions of old favorites have disappointed, and at least one all-new title, *Legends 98*, is a good idea in search of a good game engine. This criticism can't be leveled at the superb *NCAA Football 98*. It features 112 NCAA Division I-A teams from 10 conferences. With outstanding gameplay and the best player animation of any PC football game, it's the game *Madden 98* should have been.

NCAA 98 allows you to play exhibition games, seasons with modifiable schedules or classic bowl games of years past. In season mode, there are end-of-season awards and the "ESPN/USA Today Top 25," with bowl games to help determine the national champion. An atypically flash-free interface can be navigated by a gamepad or a mouse and features the most well-designed statistics-display screens in any game on the market.

The game supports eight-button gamepads, giving you more player controls (spin, hurdle, speed burst) and allowing up to six eligible receivers. More receivers doesn't automatically make for a more complex or dominant passing game – you'll find you can only track one or two receivers at a time without getting sacked, and those occasional "panic" passes usually result in easy pick-offs.

For an arcade game, the computer AI is fantastic. Even on the easiest skill level it doesn't appear to fall for the "killer play" like so many other games. Most interestingly, you're forced to alter your play-calling style to the team you're controlling, and the computer can usually provide a credible opponent even in the most mismatched games (say, Akron vs. Florida State). Most NFL teams run a fundamentally similar offense, but not so in the NCAA. Attempts to turn Oklahoma into a pass-happy school will likely end up disastrously, as will turning UCLA into a wishbone school.

Two significant flaws keep *NCAA Football* from football nirvana. Inexplicably missing from the PC version is a "Dynasty" mode (present in the PlayStation version) whereby you lead your favorite school to glory over multiple seasons. Of more concern are the inflated offensive totals. As with most arcade games, you can run too many offensive plays per game. Playing with five minute quarters produces the most credible statistics, but it's absurd to be forced to play with that limitation. All EA Sports has to do is look at how *Front Page Sports Football* handles it – bleed some clock after every play unless you're running a no-huddle offensive and implement player fatigue (no team could run a play every 10 seconds).

Also missing from the game is a player editor. Because college athletes are amateurs, EA Sports can't use their names. However, they've elected to use no names, which gives the game an impersonal feel. "HB 32 rushes for 24 yards" doesn't have the same impact as "Steve Bauman rushes for 24 yards," regardless whether or not the player name is accurate.

All of these problems, with the exception of the dynasty mode, can almost be overlooked when faced with the superb on-field play. While the blocky on-field visuals and lack of dynamic camera (a la *Madden 98*) are initially disappointing, all is forgiven once you watch the beautifully animated players.

[top to bottom]
Penalties! Penalties! Yes, folks, the game has real penalties

A solid replay function really shows off the player animations

The coin toss – will Peyton Manning, er, QB #16 be the, er, "Eklund" winner?

Receivers make coffin-corner catches as they fall out of bounds, quarterbacks have different animations while rolling and throwing in either direction and players spin, dive, hurdle, stiff arm and put their heads down as they run. Ball-carriers get stood-up by one tackler while another finishes them off and then realistically slide and fall on the field. No game even comes close to providing a more accurate visual representation of the game of football.

The sound effects are equally wonderful, with a great public-address announcer that tells you the outcome of the previous play as well as the current down. Each school has its own authentic fight song, and home teams cheer for their own team. The latter aspect could be boosted to the point of borderline annoyance to better give that feeling of being in a stadium full of drunken 19 year olds trying to impress equally drunken members of the opposite sex by reciting 200 year old fight songs.

Overall, *NCAA Football 98* is a revelation, offering the high-quality visuals and gameplay expected from EA Sports, the world-leader in sports games. While its flaws can't be denied, they also can't overcome the game's fundamental excellencies. Football fans, here's the pick of the season.
–Steve Bauman

★★★★☆

NCAA Football 98
EA Sports • www.easports.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 133MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, LAN, modem, serial

ATTENTION

players of

CIVILIZATION™ II

the IMAGINARY HORDES TORCHING your VILLAGE JUST TURNED INTO REAL PEOPLE

CITIZENS, BATTEN THY HATCHES AND MUSTER THY WITS. The new ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II brings you face to face with the most volatile opponents ever: real flesh-and-blood humans just like you. The long-awaited multiplayer edition of CIVILIZATION II also lets you join a game in progress and take over for an AI opponent. A negotiation module lets you sit down with other players to offer trades and make treaties. Or break them if you're forced to. Because with real opponents, there's no telling what course history will take.

ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II provides you with the best-selling global strategy game CIVILIZATION II and the add-on scenario pack CONFLICTS IN CIVILIZATION. Plus, the ability to go mano-a-mano with up to six other players via hot seat, modem, LAN or the Internet. You'll agree that ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II turns an award-winning strategy game into an altogether new experience. Because if you thought Attila the Hun was nasty, wait 'til you meet Frank the Dry Cleaner.

Introducing the multiplayer edition

ULTIMATE
CIVILIZATION II
MULTIPLAYER

RP

MICROPROSE
www.microprose.com

Kali: I'm not dead

I think you're wrong about Kali [*"Kali is dead," CGS+ 86, pg. 61*], and I'd like to explain why.

First of all, even if games stop supporting IPX, Kali can still be used to find opponents and form games. Many users prefer using Kali than battle.net or the Internet Gaming Zone. In fact, a lot of users choose their ISP based on whether or not they have a Kali server running locally. IGZ, for example, can be very slow, requires you to download a lot of stuff, and only works with Internet Explorer.

It's true that Kali won't work for most pay-per-play games. If the server of the game doesn't do anything for you then they shouldn't be charging for it. If it does, then you have to use it. But even in this category, there will probably be pay-per-play games which allow you to play local games for free, and Kali will be useful for them.

Finally, the issue of game designers deliberately locking out Kali. This is insane, and akin to General Motors making sure their cars only work on north-south roads. The only reason I can possibly imagine for this is that the game company wants to charge people for Internet play. But as I stated above, if the game isn't connecting to some server which actually provides a service, then why would you pay for it? And if it does, there shouldn't be any need to lock out Kali.

I hope Jay Cotton and the rest of the Kali folks provide some list of games which deliberately lock out Kali so I'll know not to buy those games. On the other hand, I wouldn't be surprised if some game companies realized that Kali is their friend, and started putting "Kali Compatible" logos on the box, and providing icons and so forth to Kali before the game even comes out.

As you said in your article, Kali is a cheap, fun, easy way to play games over the Internet. Due to the constant (free!) upgrades, the high quality of the Kali software, and the high demand for the Kali service, I expect that Kali will be around for a very long time.

Josh Lubliner
Via Internet

Enjoyed the article on Kali, but I have one simple point to make: I think Kali will co-exist with these services for a while. Here's why.

Have you ever played *Age of Empires* or *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* over Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone? Pretty cool concept but the servers are rotten and the game inevitable hangs when too much information is being presented. Solution: Kali.

Getting tired of PKiller's on battle.net? I sure did. I have a group of friends that I like to play with, and Kali's launcher is the perfect option for me.

Games like *Total Annihilation*, with it's "built-in" Kali support will continue to come out. I believe that Kali is here to stay for quite some time.

Scott Frazee
Via Internet

Whoa. I am impressed. I never knew you had Jerry Springer as a columnist. The columnist I am referring to is the person who wrote the "Kali is Dead" column. Why I call him Springer? Simply because he makes a comment for shock value, provide weak arguments for his irrational conclusions, etc. Like Springer, he tries to qualify his "knowledge" of the subject by providing its history, even sugar-coating the product.

One point he never mentioned is when Kali is going to die. Of course he does not have to be accurate with the prediction, but one should still be provided. It does not take a genius to say "Microsoft will not always be on top," but the key issue is *when* won't Microsoft be on top, which he somehow never mentions… he instead beats around the bush:

Anyone with half a brain knows that nothing lasts forever—things change rapidly on the net. Furthermore for each argument he makes, there are more rational arguments which refute his point. I know that cliché about "opinions are like...,"but when an opinion is made, compelling reasons should also be given which resulted in the opinion.

FearNo1
Via Internet

Do your comments about arguments and opinions apply to "letters to the editor" as well? -ed

Kali: it is dead

I just read your article on Kali and agree with your predictions, but you could see this coming from a mile away. The game companies must continue to seek new forms of revenue in a capitalistic society. As an avid online gamer, it sucks that a cheap game service like Kali is slowly grinding to a halt. As a true capitalist pig myself, I understand exactly what the game companies are doing and support them.

Hopefully the innovations of today will bring a brighter future for online gaming. Like the Merced processor from Intel, cable modems and even satellite modems.

Edward Madrid
Via Internet

While I agree with you that Kali is dying, I disagree as to the cause. The true cause are not "online services" such as battle.net—in fact, these services are pretty insignificant. The true factor is native TCP/IP network support, such as is found in games like *Quake*, *Age of Empires* and such. Not only are these games supported by the community (thus removing the burden of maintaining a large network off the developers shoulders) but the support scales to match demand pretty perfectly. Large groups of players already form around these games, held together by IRC, ICQ, etc.

Networks like battle.net and Westwood chat are going to fall apart when they start charging for "premium" content. Big-brother style "networks" are a fad, and the sooner the idea falls on it's face the better.

Nathan
Via Internet

You've never heard of me (no one has), but I wrote the original UNIX server for Kali. One of the real problems back then was that no one keeps their DOS box up and running all the time. I knew a UNIX server would go a long way to fixing that problem. We could connect and play at any time on a server running off a machine that should never go down. I got a free registration for it and asked to be included in an FAQ or History file, but that wasn't taken too well.

Around that time, I suggested to Jay that he code up an API for using the Kali interface, and provide (or license) it to game developers. I believe this was before TEN had gone public, and nothing like it was really out there. I talked (via e-mail) to Ted Morris of Westwood Studios at length about the possibility of Kali and their games, and even got Westwood willing to fly Jay out there. However, Ted told me Jay just never really got back in touch with them after this initial meeting so they moved ahead on their network stuff, which grew into Westwood Chat.

To this day I'm still frustrated that Jay didn't pursue that, and other, ideas. If Kali had a nice API, game companies could use to natively support Internet play instead of just IPX, with no more programming effort than IPX itself needed, back before TEN, Mplayer and DirectPlay existed. Had this path been followed, history might have been written much differently. Alas…

It was a nice article though, and I agree with your conclusions.

Jonathan Roy
Via Internet

CORRECTION: In our January issue, the rating for Red Orb's *Take No Prisoners* was incorrect. The correct rating is 4/5 stars.

we crave feedback

Send correspondence to editor@cdmag.com

Letters may be edited for space considerations.

Computer Games Strategy Plus (ISSN 0955-4424) is published monthly by Strategy Plus, Inc. Subscription rate is $9.95 for a one year subscription, $21.95 Canada.
Periodical postage paid at Rochester, VT 05767 and additional mailing offices. **Produced in U.S.A.**
Standard Mail (A) enclosed in the following editions: 4 & 5 with CD-ROM. Bulk Rate U.S. postage paid, Des Moines, IA 50318, Permit No. 4864.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Strategy Plus, Inc., PO Box 469074, Escondido, CA 92046.

USCF Chess™

INTRODUCING THE ONLY CHESS GAME THAT CAN GIVE YOU A U.S.C.F.™ RANKING.

"USCF Chess is easy to use, fun to play, and, on its maximum setting, an amazingly strong opponent. Measure yourself against USCF Chess and see how you would do in actual United States Chess Federation tournament play."

Mike Cavallo, Executive Director of the United States Chess Federation

"USCF Chess is fun to play and will help rate players among the best in the world"

Grandmaster Larry Kaufman

- The only chess program officially endorsed by the United States Chess Federation – the largest chess organization in the U.S.
- The only chess program that can award an official U.S.C.F.™ rating that can be used to enter an official tournament
- The only chess program with a user-friendly interface, 300,000 move opening book library, and tutorials written by Tasc
- USCF Chess includes an offer for a discounted membership in the USCF
- Adjustable computer AI speeds, ability levels LAN and modem play

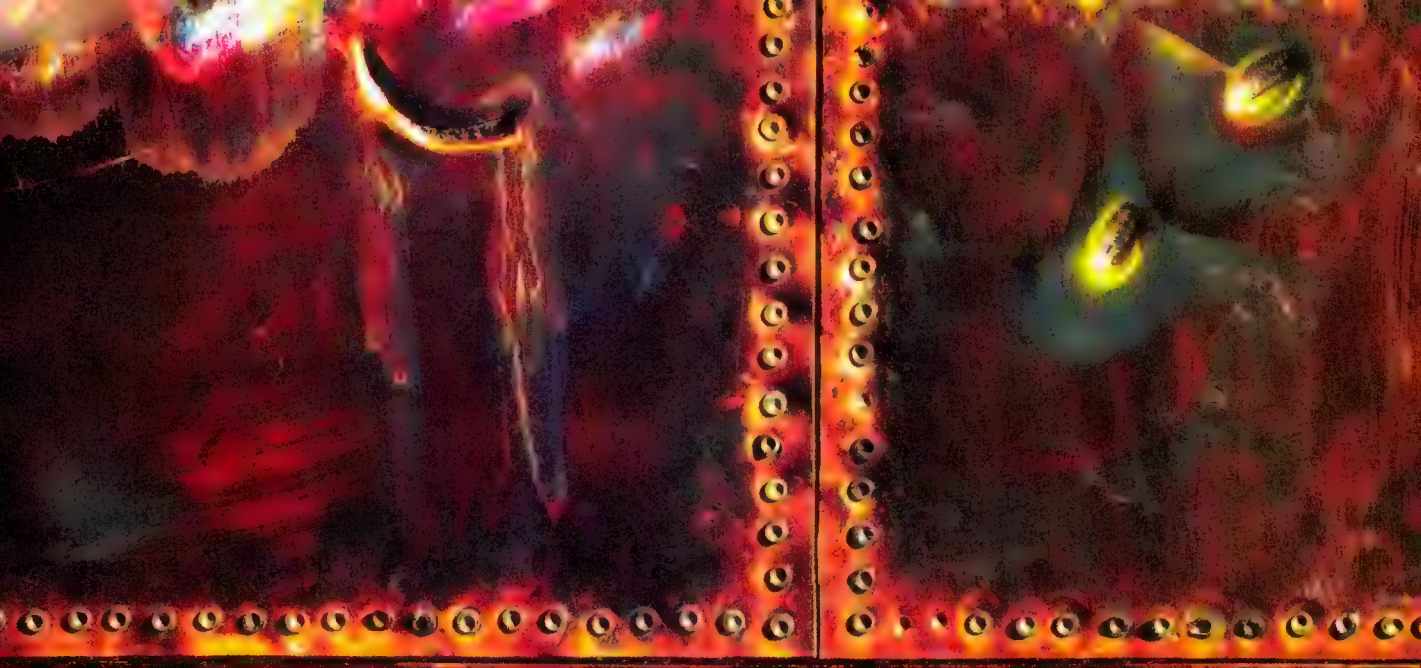
Coming this November.

Interplay

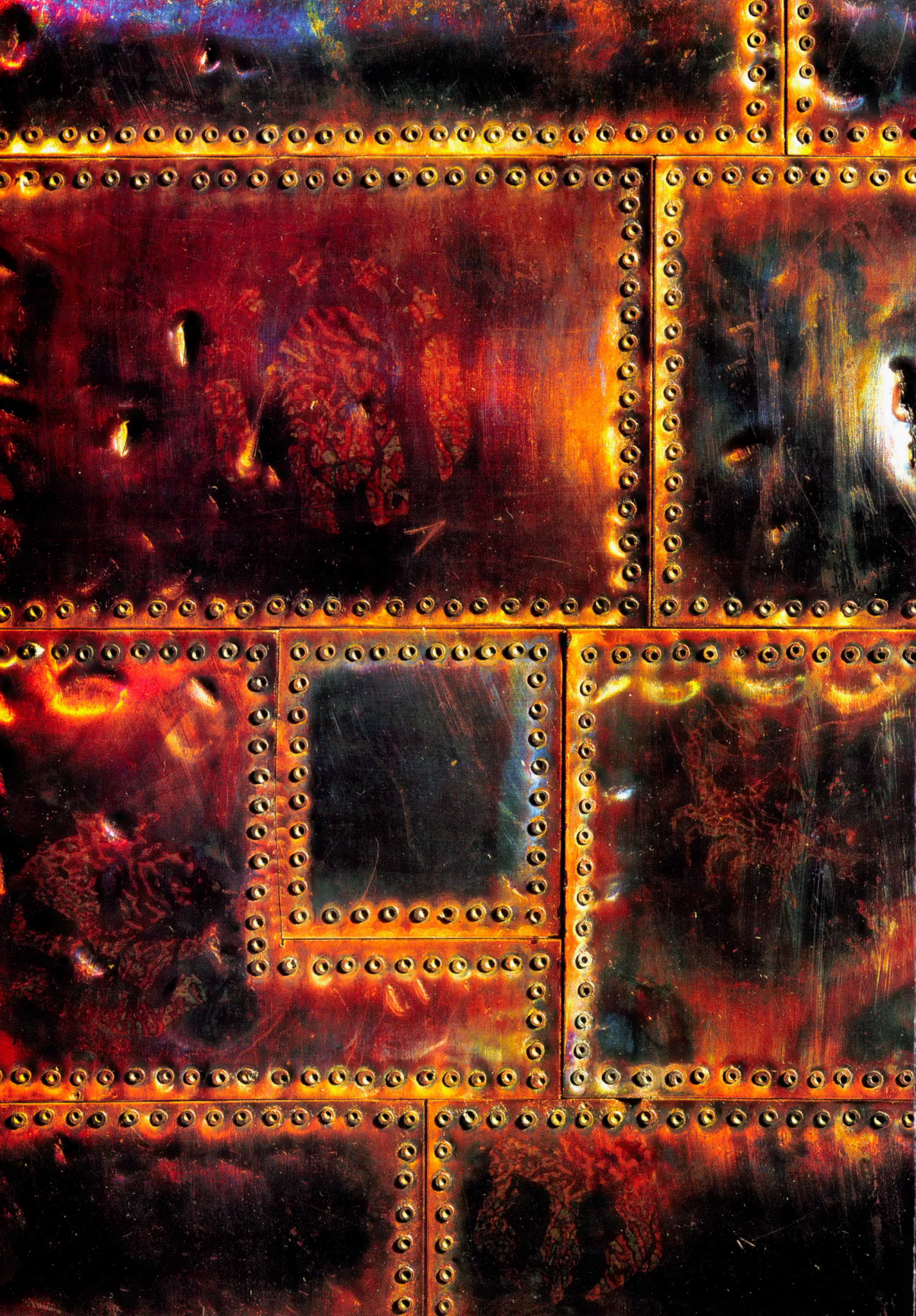
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

www.interplay.com

USCF Chess: ©1997 Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. USCF Chess, The U.S. Chess Federation logo and U.S. Chess Federation are trademarks of the United States Chess Federation. All rights reserved. Interplay and By Gamers. For Gamers. are trademarks of Interplay Productions. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE FEELING A LITTLE BIT NOSTALGIC, BREAK OUT THE 8-TRACK, SLIP INTO SOMETHING TERRY CLOTH AND FIRE UP ANY OF THE REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAMES RELEASED LAST FALL.



EIDOS Interactive is a trademark of EIDOS, PLC. © 1997/1998 EIDOS. Dominion: Storm over Gift 3 is a trademark of Ion Storm L.P. All other trademarks and trade names are properties of their respective owners.

- 4 races
- 60 missions
- 44 vehicles
- Over 95,000 frames of animation
- 4 resolutions, 640 x 480 to 1280 x 1024 - All at 30 fps +
- 8-player multiplayer with deathmatching and cooperative
- The most sophisticated AI ever in a realtime strategy game

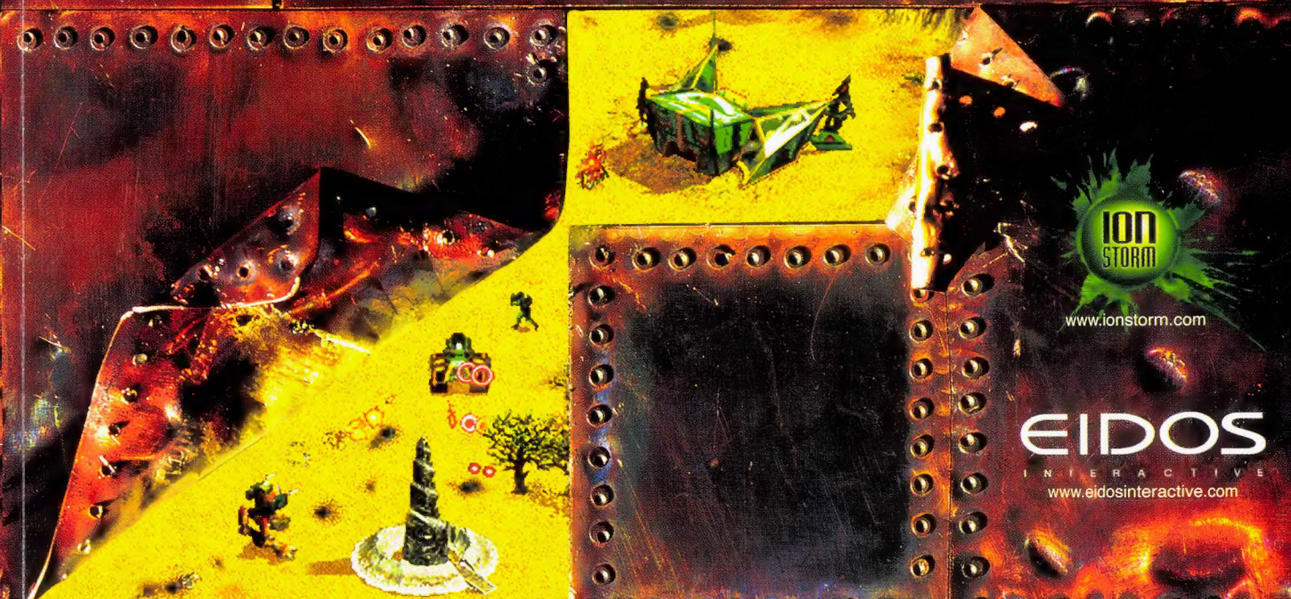
DOMINION: REAL TIME. REAL STRATEGY.

A TODD PORTER GAME

DOMINION

STORM OVER GIFT 3™

REAL-TIME. STRATEGY.

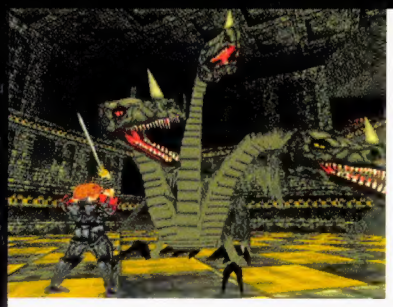


ION STORM

www.ionstorm.com

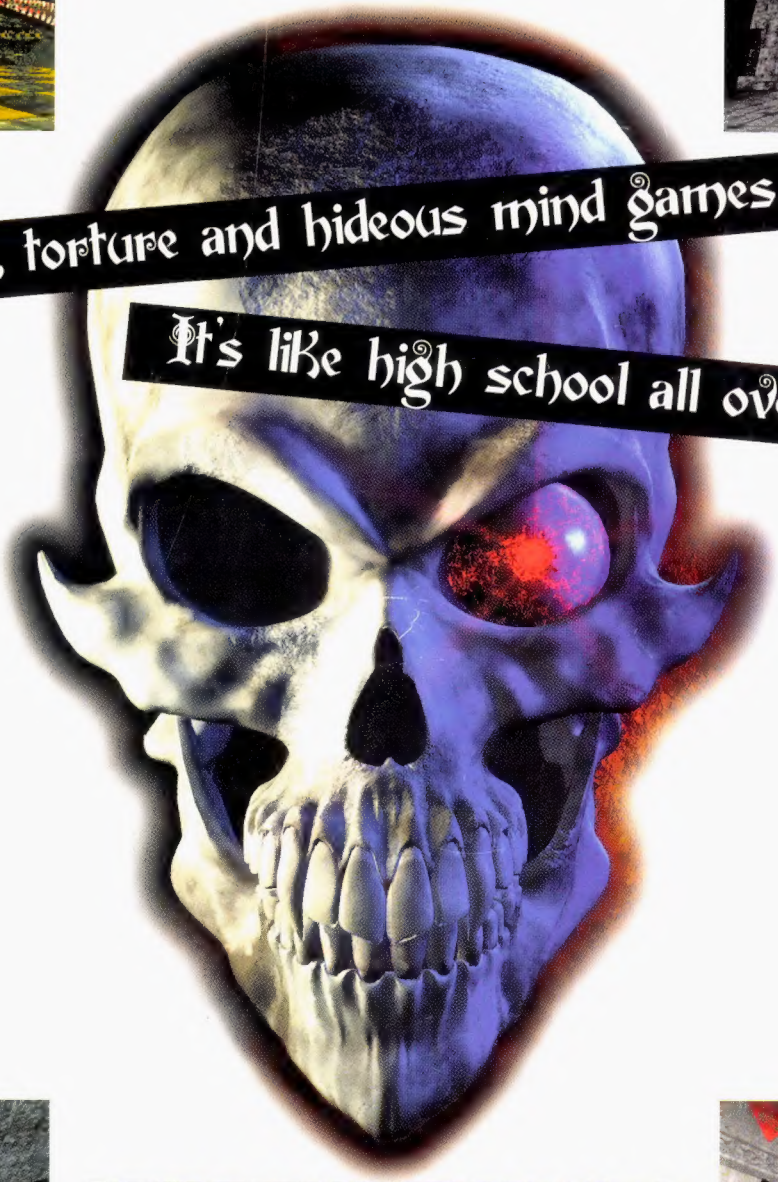
EIDOS INTERACTIVE

www.eidosinteractive.com



Coersion, torture and hideous mind games.

It's like high school all over again.



·IAN LIVINGSTONE'S·

DEATHTRAP Dungeon

PC CD

PlayStation

The names have changed, but the torment remains the same. In this institution of higher loathing, it's skeletal warriors, zombies, flying dragons and monstrous spiders who are out to make your life a living hell. So go ahead, outwit and outslice every undead inhabitant in this maze of devious traps. And find out why these just might be the best years of your life.

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

You've been warned.

www.deathtrapdungeon.com

Deathtrap Dungeon and Eidos Interactive are trademarks of Eidos. ©1997 Eidos.

Made with love by

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!